Hafa Adai!

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'TEACH A MAN TO FISH...'
A resident tries his hand at fishing near the dock at the Chalan Kanoa beach. Much of the islands' fishing activity is for leisure and subsistence purposes, with no effort to develop a viable fishing industry despite being surrounded by miles and miles of ocean.
JON PEREZ

Couple allegedly harbored two illegal aliens for cash

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

» Parents agree to pay $15K-$20K for child to study on Saipan; 'uncle' paid $7K to marry US citizen

Criminal charges have been filed in federal court against a couple who allegedly got paid to harbor two illegal Chinese aliens, including a child they enrolled at a public school.

The Homeland Security Investigations Task Force filed the criminal complaint on Thursday, charging Francisco Tydingco and Lili Zhang Tydingco with two counts of harboring an illegal alien.

Task force officer Jesse Dubrall served the summons on the Tydingco couple at their house in Dandan on Saturday.

The couple did not show up at their initial appearance hearing yesterday, prompting U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona to issue a bench warrant for their arrest.

A U.S. Probation Officer told the court that attempts to contact the couple were unsuccessful.

Assistant U.S. attorney Russell Lorfing moved to unseal the case. The judge granted the

See COUPLE on Page 4

CHC billing to be done in-house

By DENNIS B. CHAN
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REPORTER

» NMICA tasks hospital with 'righting' billing services

The recent payment plan signed between the local hospital and public utility includes a provision that would require the hospital to get billings and collection done in-house—a move seen by officials close to the issue as a back-handed way to get the hospital off the services of a private company from Guam, and possibly correct the millions of dollars gaps in services charged but not collected by the hospital, *Saipan Tribune* learned yesterday.

The agreement—called the

See CHC on Page 4

Decision on Manila commutation today

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

RELATED NEWS
➤ Retired judge backs commuting Manila's sentence. PAGE 7

The Eloy S. Inos administration expects to make a decision today, Tuesday, whether to commute the 60-year sentence of a Filipino national who was convicted in 2002 for the death of his 6-month-old goddaughter.

Reynaldo Manila, who has already served 15 years of his 60-year prison term, is requesting that his sentence be commuted so that he could seek medical treatment for an eye issue that could lead to blindness,

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Local

NMIS wins T Galleria Christmas tree contest

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Northern Marianas International School, fresh from reaping awards in last week's 2015 Christmas in the Marianas Festival, received another holiday gift yesterday after its entry won in T Galleria's Festival of Trees contest.

As part of T Galleria's second annual Holiday Festival, 10 schools were given the chance to decorate a tree based on this year's theme, "Christmas is beautiful in the CNMI."

"The festival is a way to share the Christmas spirit and showcase the talent and creativity of the youth of our community…share it with our island visitors, who want to enjoy and experience Christmas on Saipan," T Galleria promotions manager Jamika Reyes told *Saipan Tribune*.

T Galleria provided the materials used for decorating the trees.

NMIS made island-inspired ornaments using recycled materials. The decorations featured latte stones, coconut trees, seashells, white sand beaches, coral reefs, and fish, in addition to the traditional angels, stockings, and Christmas bells.

"We never told them what materials they could use but NMIS showed their creativity and originality by recycling. One ornament was made from egg shells and that for me is unique," said Reyes.

"The outcome was 600 beautifully decorated ornaments displayed on 10 Christmas trees throughout the store. The ornaments from each school had been on display since Dec. 1 and we invited the general public to cast their votes for their favorite Christmas tree," added Reyes.

Tourists cast their votes on which tree they think was the best that captured this year's theme. Voting was done from Dec. 1 to 25 and the winner was announced last Monday.

"All entries were beautiful and the students showed their creativity but NMIS' entry stood out and earned the most number of votes from the visitors after we tallied the ballots."

JON PEREZ

Northern Marianas International School vice principal Jener Pineda, fourth left, joins school adviser for administration Eden Guillo and two of their students in receiving the symbolic check after winning the T Galleria Festival of Trees contest. Others in photo are, from left, T Galleria promotions coordinator Marie Sablan, assistant general manager Ben Babauta, promotions manager Jamika Reyes, and assistant GM for sales Chung Lee.

NMIS bested nine other schools based on voting done by local and foreign tourists who visit T Galleria. NMIS beat San Vicente Elementary School by 10 votes, 207-197, to win the $500 top prize, while the latter went home with $400 and William S. Reyes Elementary School settled for the $300 third prize.

NMIS vice principal Jener Pineda, in a brief interview with *Saipan Tribune*, said that winning the grand prize is another blessing for the school.

"This is the product of the cooperation by the students, faculty, administration, and parents at NMIS. We're happy that we won another contest after a challenging year not only for us but the entire community after Typhoon Soudelor," said Pineda.

He added that it was NMIS' first time to join the T Galleria contest.

Brilliant Star Montessori School, Golden Harvest Elementary School, Grace Christian Academy, Koblerville Elementary School, Mt. Carmel School, Saipan Community School, and Saipan International School were the other participants and each received $100.

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Man allegedly threatened to shoot wife, police

Police arrested a 43-year-old man for allegedly breaking things inside their house and threatening to shoot his wife and police with a shotgun if they enter their residence in Dandan last Friday, Christmas night.

The wife called the police when her husband, Joaquin Babauta Camacho, refused to open the house's door.

At 12:18am on Saturday, members of the Department of Public Safety's Special Enforcement Action Section entered the house and arrested Camacho without incident, according to DPS acting spokesman Jason Tarkong yesterday.

Camacho was taken to Superior Court yesterday for his initial appearance on charges of assault with a dangerous weapon and disturbing the peace. His bail was set at $15,000 cash. Preliminary hearing will be on Jan. 5 at 1:30pm.

Assistant public defender Michael Sato was appointed as counsel for Camacho.

Police detective Vincent A. Igisaiar said preliminary investigation showed that Camacho's wife called DPS on Friday at 9pm and reported that Camacho has a .410 caliber shotgun and had threatened to kill her or anybody who tries to enter their house, located along Sirena Avenue in Dandan Homestead.

Igisaiar said a police officer arrived at the location at 9:09pm and met with the wife. After a few minutes, more police officers arrived at the scene.

Police set up a perimeter outside the house and attempted several times to communicate with Camacho, to no avail. SEAS officers later barged inside the house and arrested Camacho, who was said to be asleep.

According to the wife, Camacho became mad on Friday upon learning that she had dropped off their son at her family's house, where the child wanted to spend Christmas and sleep over.

As the couple was on their way home after attending an evening novena in Finasisu, Camacho started punching the steering wheel of their car, pulling the wheel to the left and right, causing the vehicle to swerve and nearly got into accident near Matty's Barbecue in As Lito.

The wife was so terrified that when they got to their house in Dandan, she did not immediately get down from the car.

Camacho went inside the house and started throwing things around. She later got down, went into the house to use the restroom, and told him she was going to pick up their son.

Camacho, however, shouted at her and accused her of having an affair. As she got to the car, Camacho took their other 1-month-old baby from the car seat and told her to leave. He walked back inside the house.

The wife said Camacho, who was holding his .410 shotgun, shouted at her that if she tries to come into the house he would shoot her or anybody, including the police.

When she tried to open the door, she found it locked. She asked him to open the door but he did not reply. That's when she decided to call the police.

The wife also disclosed to police that a night after Typhoon Soudelor, Camacho, who was intoxicated, shot a round of his gun into the air when there were children running around on the street near their house. Before that incident, she said, their house was burglarized and their bush cutter was stolen. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

CUC loses huge amount of water from Kannat Tabla tank

»Chalan Laulau to experience intermittent water supply today

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
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REPORTER

Water distribution problems continue to plague the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. as they lost about 1,000 gallons of water per minute from the Kannat Tabla tank yesterday.

According to engineer Nicolette Villagomez, a huge amount of water was lost yesterday after they released water from Kannat Tabla million-gallon water tank to the Chalan Laulau area.

"We released water to Chalan Laulau as per our schedule and within two hours we lost seven feet in the tank and that translates to 200,000 gallons of water and that is not normal. That is not normal at all," Villagomez told *Saipan Tribune*.

She said it usually takes four to five hours to use up about eight feet of water from the Kannat Tabla tank.

"We're looking at a possible leak or leaks," Villagomez said.

Today, customers served by the Kannat Tabla reservoir will experience intermittent water service beginning at 6:30am. Customers in Chalan Kiya, Kannat Tabla, Fina Sisu, As Perdido, As Terlaje, Quartermaster Road, Chalan Pale Arnold Road from Chalan Monsignor Guerrero Road to Gualo Rai Road, and Beach Road from Chalan Monsignor Guerrero Road to Gualo Rai Road will be affected.

CUC water personnel were unable to provide a specific day or time for the conclusion of the testing process.

"We will be sectioning off the Kannat Tabla service area and we'll see how the water reacts to it," Villagomez said

Once they find a section where water supply drops significantly, the leak detection team will inspect the area.

"We're addressing leaks as fast as we can and we have a contract that's hopefully be signed soon that will help us with the repairs of the leaks in the system," CUC associate engineer Larry Manacop added.

Source problem

Manacop added that they are also looking at problems at the water source.

"Not sure if it's leak but also we're looking at source problem. We have seven wells on Isley that are down because of pump and motor issues and those also affect the loading of our Kannat Tabla tank," Manacop said.

The downed pumps, which can produce about 50 gallons of water per minute for a total of 350 gpm, will take about six to eight weeks to be replaced.

Manacop said they already ordered the replacements but they had to be manufactured. Overall, this would translate to fewer water supplies for customers on island.

As of now, water personnel will be focusing on addressing the distribution issues first.

"We can't address the wells until we get the pumps and motors in. We ordered them and they're not on island yet," Manacop said.

Air Force training at FDM

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. Air Force will conduct training at the island of Farallon de Medinilla today and tomorrow, Dec. 29-30, from 9:30am to 3:30pm. The general public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators are advised to stay clear of the area during the dates and times indicated.

The general location of the training on the island of Farallon de Medinilla will be on a 12-nautical mile radius on all quadrants. Farallon de Medinilla plays a special and unique role in national defense because its location provides frequent access that supports established training requirements. ***(PR)***

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HARD AT WORK IN PARADISE
Customers of Harry Blalock and his Axe Murderer Tours scuba diving company get ready for a dip in the waters near the Chalan Kanoa beach.
JON PEREZ

CUC: No FEMA reimbursements yet

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has yet to receive reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the expenses they incurred due to the damage brought by Typhoon Soudelor.

In an interview, chief financial officer Matthew Yaquinto said they have about 15 project worksheets for FEMA.

About five worksheets have been approved so far for the "smaller" projects, according to Yaquinto, but they haven't received any funds yet.

» Unreimbursed amount might be passed on to consumers

He added that a FEMA representative will be coming back on island for their worksheets and documentations.

Yaquinto said they will be spending over $20 million on Soudelor recovery projects alone.

Since FEMA will be reimbursing 90 percent of the costs, about $2 million will be paid by CUC, but the corporation might pass that on to consumers.

"It has to be in the rates," Yaquinto said. "It will be on our rate case."

Yaquinto said they will be discussing this with their consultants, economist.com, which will be coming in January.

"Based on our annual, it will be 1 cent a kilowatt hour," Yaquinto said when asked what $2 million will look like when passed on to the consumer.

CHC

From Page 1

"Net Metering Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement between the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp."—does not specifically mention the Guam provider—the Guam Marianas Collection Agency—but it contains language that would have the hospital conduct these services in-house, using savings earned by the payment plan.

"All such billing-to-collection function shall be operationally performed directly by the CHCC within timeframes established," the agreement states.

If the hospital does not hire direct personnel or initiate a place of service billing for ambulatory patient care and ancillary services within six months, or follow provisions to generate preliminary bills for inpatient services and report to the public utility their progress on these provisions, among others, then the hospital may be found "in material breach of the agreement," rendering the payment plan void.

A big part of the material weaknesses found in recent hospital audits have to do with billing and revenue that, for one, prompted auditors to issue a "disclaimer of opinion" in an audit covering fiscal years 2013 and 2012.

The recent payment plan agreement tasks CHCC to institute policies and practices, including clinician documentation that "operationalizes billing and collection for services at the time services are provided."

"We were unable to determine the propriety of receivables, inventories, due to/from CNMI, accounts payable, due to related parties, accrued payroll, accrued taxes and other liabilities and related revenues, expenses and non-operating income… as CHCC could not substantiate general ledger balances due to inadequacies in accounting records," said the auditing firm, Deloitte.

For fiscal year 2012, the auditor also stated that CHCC does not monitor account receivables for collectability and notes issues with CHCC not following up on payment.

Hospital official have defended issues with collecting to local utility officials by saying that about 30 or 40 percent of these patients cannot pay, though utility officials have doubted this, *Saipan Tribune* gathered yesterday.

Last week, CHC and CUC officials signed the agreement to address the $14 million the hospital owes the utilities company. Under the deal, CHCC will initially pay CUC $250,000 to settle part of the $14 million it currently owes the utilities company. The hospital will also be on the hook for minimum monthly payments of $150,000 until such time a solar power system is up and running at the hospital.

DECISION

From Page 1

according to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

Medical costs that the CNMI would have to bear to treat Manila as a Department of Corrections inmate, a thorough review of his criminal case, and the urgency for him to receive treatment, and alternatives to commutation are some of the issues being mulled ahead of a decision, administration officials said yesterday.

For one, acting governor Ralph DLG. Torres has been advised by Attorney General Edward Manibusan to consider a temporary release and permit for Manila to travel to the Philippines, *Saipan Tribune* learned, a move that may satisfy Manila's pressing health concerns while safeguarding the CNMI's interests in seeking justice for the victim of Manila's crime.

The Office of the Attorney General has made it clear that they do not believe that Manila's health concerns warrant commuting a lengthy sentence—with 45 years left to serve—for the serious crime. The OAG has also warned that commuting Manila's sentence runs the risk of setting a dangerous precedent with no clear limitations for future cases.

The OAG has asked Torres to examine an alternative course of action that would balance Manila's medical needs and safeguard the CNMI's interest that Manila serve a sentence that accurately reflects the seriousness of his crime, *Saipan Tribune* learned.

On Dec. 22, the CNMI Board of Parole unanimously voted to support commuting Manila's 60-year prison sentence. Manila is 54 years old and has served 15 years so far.

Manila was 39 years old in 2002 when then-Superior Court Associate Judge Virginia Sablan-Onerheim sentenced him in June that year to 60 years in prison for second-degree murder over the death of the infant.

The baby lingered in the hospital for several days before dying on Nov. 6, 2000.

A jury found Manila guilty of second-degree murder and child abuse.

Manila is five years away from being eligible for parole.

COUPLE

From Page 1

request.

Dubrall stated in his affidavit that the Tydingcos harbored and shielded the minor child and Rongxue Liu so they would not be detected by immigration authorities.

Dubrall said the Division of Youth Services removed the child from the home of the Tydingcos on Feb. 19, 2015. Four days later, DYS filed a petition to obtain temporary wardship of the child, alleging that the child would be in imminent danger if left in the custody of the Tydingco couple.

On April 14, 2015, the Office of the Attorney General contacted the U.S. Attorney's Office and informed it of possible immigration fraud involving the Tydingcos. The U.S. Attorney's Office subsequently relayed the information to Homeland Security Investigations.

Dubrall said the child's passport lists her as a Chinese national, while her I-94 Form notes that she arrived on Saipan on Sept. 28, 2013, and was paroled into the U.S. until Nov. 4, 2013.

Dubrall said that on April 28, 2015, he obtained two reports from the Department of Public Safety regarding an interview with the child and Liu conducted on Feb. 20, 2015.

In that interview, the child disclosed that she stayed with the Tydingcos at their residence in Dandan upon her arrival on Saipan.

Liu, the child's purported uncle, stated in the interview that he paid Lili Tydingco $7,000 in exchange for helping him enter into a fake marriage and obtain a green card.

On May 6, 2015, HSI special agents conducted a video conferencing interview with the purported biological parents of the child.

The parents said they were introduced to Lili Tydingco through a mutual friend. They said Lili Tydingco informed them that their child could go to school in the U.S. and get a green card.

The parents said they agreed to pay Lili Tydingco between $15,000 and $20,000 to take their child to Saipan and get her a green card.

The Tydingcos traveled to China to pick up the girl.

A Public School System registration form for the child dated Oct. 9, 2013, lists Francisco Tydingco as the girl's father and Lili Tydingco as her mother. In another section of the registration form, Francisco Tydingco was listed as the uncle of the child.

During an interview by HSI special agents on June 16, 2015, Liu stated that he is a Chinese citizen and that he is the uncle of the child.

Liu disclosed that he arrived on Saipan on July 25, 2014, and that upon his arrival, Francisco Tydingco picked him up at the airport and drove him to their house in Dandan.

Liu said he resided at the Tydingcos from July 25, 2014, until Oct. 10, 2014. After arriving on Saipan, he said he paid Lili Tydingco $7,000 to arrange for him to marry a U.S. citizen.

Dubrall said during his and HSI special agent's interview with Lili Tydingco on Oct. 1, 2015, she stated that she traveled to China in September 2013 and came back to Saipan with the child, who is her friend's daughter.

According to Lili Tydingco, the child's parents agreed to pay her $100 per month to cover daily expenses for the child. After four or five months, Lili Tydingco asked the parents to pay her $120 per month because $100 wasn't enough to cover the daily expenses.

Lili Tydingco said she saw the child's passport and the child's I-94 Form, which showed she was only paroled in until November 2013.

The child stayed with the Tydingcos for a total of one and a half years. During this time, the girl was enrolled in public school.

Lili Tydingco denied promising the girl's parents that she would help her obtain a green card. She also stated that the child's uncle traveled to Saipan and stayed with her and Francisco Tydingco for several days.

WITH HART'S PRESIDENCY ENDING IN JUNE

Is 6 months enough time to find new NMC president?

By DAISY DEMAPAN
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REPORTER

With only six months left until the end of the Northern Marianas College president's contract, the Board of Regents has yet to begin its search for a replacement.

In November, NMC president Dr. Sharon Y. Hart stated that she has been collaborating with the Board of Regents to "ensure the smooth transition and stability of leadership" at the college after entering an agreement with the board to extend her employment contract until June 2016.

Hart, who was hired in 2011, noted that she plans to focus on her family and return to the United States.

At the same time, according to the *Portland Press Herald*, she is one of the finalists for the presidency of the University of Maine at Fort Kent. Coinciding with her leave early this month, she is one of four finalists who visited the campus during the first two weeks of December.

The *Herald* stated that after the campus visits, the search committee will finalize its work and send its findings and recommendation to the chancellor who will make a recommendation in January so the new president can begin work early next year.

In previous years before Hart's presidency, the board struggled with finding a qualified candidate, trailing along a controversial presidency with Dr. Carmen Fernandez.

The Board of Regents expressed that under Hart's leadership, the college has moved from show-cause status under the Western Association of Schools and Colleges-Junior Commission to accreditation reaffirmation with no reports or visits required.

Other accomplishments cited under Hart's leadership include the college's continued increase in student enrollment, ensuring that the college's bachelor in education program continues to receive federal financial aid, successful audits of the college, and the CNMI joining the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education.

Hart noted her commitment to meeting the goals outlined in NMC's five-year strategic plan, which focuses on workforce development efforts, college completion, student success and support, and resource development.

However, with the end fast approaching for Hart to move on to greener pastures, the board has not put a plan in place for finding her replacement.

Although the board's committee on personnel has yet to decide on the critical issue, in previous years they gave 100-percent recruitment and hiring authority to the Association of Community College Trustees or ACCT, which provides leadership services and executive search support to successfully identify community college leaders. That, however, has ruled out a local search for a possible candidate.

Senate OKs bill to prohibit import of illegal pesticides

The Senate passed a bill this month to criminalize the importation of illegal pesticides into the Commonwealth.

Senate Bill 19-70 says the importation of illegal pesticides must be criminalized in order to protect and safeguard the health and safety of the people of the Commonwealth.

The bill amends a provision in Commonwealth code to add "illegal pesticides" to a list of contraband items that makes it illegal for any person to knowingly enter the Commonwealth with the intent to import these items, or attempt to cause another to bring or import into the Commonwealth, or conceal for the purpose of importation these items.

The Senate passed the bill by unanimous vote on first and final reading on Dec. 11.

Sen. Justo Quitugua (Ind-Saipan) introduced the bill. ***(Dennis B. Chan)***

Man, 22, is nabbed for alleged sex with 14-year-old girlfriend

Police arrested early Saturday morning a 22-year-old man who allegedly had sex with his 14-year-old girlfriend he just recently met through Facebook.

Glenn Anthony Mafnas Ruben Jr. was taken to Superior Court yesterday on a charge of sexual abuse of a minor in the second degree.

Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho retained the $50,000 cash bail set earlier by Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Preliminary hearing will be on Jan. 5 at 1:30pm. Assistant public defender Michael Sato was appointed as counsel for Ruben. Assistant attorney general Barbara Cepeda appeared for the government.

According to police detective Dee Liza S. Udui, she responded to a reported sexual abuse of a minor at a residence in San Roque on Saturday at 1:03am.

During her interview with the girl, the girl said she and Ruben recently became friends through Facebook.

The girl said she left her house last Friday night without telling anyone to meet Ruben at the basketball court behind the abandoned fire station in San Roque.

The girl said after they had sex on a table in the hallway area of the former fire station, Ruben decided to take her home. While they were walking to the entrance of the fire station, two of her cousins saw her and started yelling because they were looking for her.

One of the cousins chased Ruben, who ran toward his house.

Police arrested Ruben at 2:36am that same day.

Ruben allegedly admitted having sex with the girl on Christmas night and that he is aware that she is only 14 years old. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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SURPRISE PERFORMANCE CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mount Carmel School students were recently treated to a surprise performance by the Hye Neung Wind Orchestra, featuring a classical medley, a medley of John Williams soundtrack songs (including Star Wars), a medley of songs from Disney's Frozen, Christmas songs, and a rendition of Frank Sinatra's *My Way*.

Senate pushes review of salaries of elected officials

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Senate passed a bill this month to establish an advisory commission that will look at potential salary increases for the governor, lieutenant governor, legislators, and mayors.

Senate Bill 19-45 notes that the last time salaries were increased for elected officials was during the 7th Legislature, when an advisory commission was established to review compensation.

The Senate believes "it is time to review the salaries" and make recommendations on compensation for these elected officials, the bill states.

Public Law 7-31 increased the annual salaries of legislators to $39,000, for governor to $70,000, and the lieutenant governor to $60,000.

In passing the bill, the Senate amended the original bill to include mayors.

They also deleted a part of the bill to "avoid any unintended offense to past and current legislators," a Senate committee report on the bill states.

That amendment deleted the following: "The Legislature believes in the idea that raising salaries of elected officials would signal the importance of the job, attract competent person who might otherwise enter a field with higher salaries, allow politicians to focus on important and critical matters rather than be too concerned with their income, and make politicians less vulnerable to the influence of deep-pocket interests."

The advisory commission would consist of three members appointed by the governor, two members appointed by the Senate president, and two members appointed by the House speaker, and would serve without pay but reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred during their duties, according to the bill, which was introduced by Sen. Justo Quitugua (Ind-Saipan).

Chinese man allegedly wanted by Interpol is found with 'ice' and pot

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A Chinese man pulled over by a police detective on the road allegedly for being wanted by Interpol was arrested along with his passenger for possession of methamphetamine or "ice" and marijuana in Garapan last Wednesday night.

Li Qiran, 29, and Joshua Sablan Diaz, 30, were taken to Superior Court yesterday for their initial appearance on a charge of illegal possession of a controlled substance.

The police report did not mention why Qiran, a tour guide and a taxi driver, is wanted by Interpol. Diaz has a pending "ice" trafficking case.

Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho kept the $20,000 cash bail that the court originally imposed each on Qiran and Diaz. Preliminary hearing will be on Jan. 5 at 1:30pm.

Assistant public defender Michael Sato was appointed as counsel for Qiran, while attorney Vicente Salas was appointed as counsel for Diaz. Assistant attorney general Barbara Cepeda appeared for the government.

According to police detective Jeffrey I. Norita, police officers were dispatched on Wednesday at 6pm to assist police detective Jesse Dubrall for a violator stop on a red Toyota Corolla with license plate ADV-221, which was being driven by Qiran, who is allegedly wanted by Interpol.

Officers saw the car traveling south on Chalan Pale Arnold Road in Garapan and pursued it until Asucena Avenue near Garapan Market.

When the officers patted down Qiran and Diaz, officers allegedly found a clear Ziploc bag containing a crystal-like substance on Diaz's right cargo pocket.

Diaz and Qiran were brought to U.S. Homeland Security/Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office in Puerto Rico for further investigation. They were later brought to the Department of Corrections and detained.

A crime scene technician tested the recovered crystal-like substance weighing 0.3 gross grams and found it presumptive positive for methamphetamine.

Dubrall allegedly found underneath the driver's seat of the car a bag containing Ziploc baggies containing a crystal-like substance and a green leafy substance believed to be marijuana.

Dubrall also found in the car a "large amount of money."

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Retired judge Lizama supports commuting Manila's sentence

By DAISY DEMAPAN
daisy_demapan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Retired Superior Court associate judge Juan Lizama highlighted the need for compassion with respect to the possible commutation of the 60-year prison sentence of Reynaldo A. Manila, who was convicted in 2002 for the death of his 6-month-old goddaughter.

Lizama

The CNMI Board of Parole unanimously voted on Dec. 23 to recommend commuting Manila's sentence. The decision now rests with the Office of the Governor.

When asked whether his support is related to Manila's deteriorating health, Lizama noted a different reason that many not have been considered.

Although he does not know Manila or any of his family members personally, Lizama said he has followed the case for many years and had hoped for the day when Manila's sentence would be commuted.

"It is the right thing to do. Mr. Manila has served more years than anyone who has ever served a sentence for a baby's death. I commend the parole board, its chairman, and its legal counsel for their recommendation to the acting governor," he said.

Research shows that the average sentence for those convicted of shaken baby syndrome is no more than 12 years throughout U.S. jurisdictions and such was the case in the early 2000s when all convicted defendants would most likely get released in four years.

"At that time, I was privileged to have attended a symposium on shaken baby syndrome death and sentencing. The observation the participants gave was that defendants would serve a minimum of four years," he said.

Manila has already served 15 years in prison after a jury found him guilty of second-degree murder and child abuse.

Lizama also pointed out that Manila received a 60-year sentence around the same period of time when national experts still found shaken baby syndrome deaths hard to prove.

"Shaken-baby syndrome death is hard to prove and here is a guy who continues to say he didn't kill, he didn't kill," Lizama said, adding that jurists throughout the country find the causation of death in shaken baby death cases the hardest to pinpoint.

"We just have to look at the administrative process here, appreciate that it exists and commend [those who] make the right decisions," he said.

Last week, the six-member parole board chaired by Ramon B. Camacho reached their decision after listening to the testimonies of three persons, including the baby's parents, who opposed commutation, and five others who supported commuting Manila's sentence. Their recommendation has been sent to the governor who will decide on the commutation today.

Manila, a Filipino national, was 39 years old when then-Superior Court Associate Judge Virginia Sablan-Onerheim sentenced him in June 2002 to 60 years in prison over the death of the infant who lingered in the hospital for several days before dying on Nov. 6, 2000.

WINTER ENGLISH CAMP CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This Christmas Break, Mount Carmel School hosts 35 students from Seoul and Busan who will study English. After the break, they will participate in an English immersion program as they join their Knight counterparts in regular classes.

NMHC weighs new loan program

By FRAULEINE VILLANUEVA-DIZON
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REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Housing Corp. is looking at offering a new loan program to families in need.

According to NMHC corporate director Jesse Palacios, the proposed program was discussed during their ad-hoc meeting this month. He said the ad-hoc committee agreed to set aside a portion of the funds that they provide as a guarantee to the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development to be able to give out loans to Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

"The loan amounts are going to be higher than our current HOME program maximum, which is $57,000, and we have another $20,000 as supplemental. So it's going to be higher than the $77,000 loan," Palacios said.

Palacios said they are looking at about $1 million to be able to give out 10 loans or so for those who need it either for new construction or rehabilitation.

"We still need to come out with our own provisions on who can avail of this program. We're looking at how we can maybe assist more families out there by going beyond HUD maximum income," he said.

Palacios said the fund that will be used came from collections from renting and selling their properties. Because the funding is not federal money, Palacios said they can go above the HUD income limits.

The discussions during the ad-hoc meeting will be brought to the NMHC board at their next meeting in January for approval.

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10 pm Cocktail Party only @ $50.00 per adult / per child
New Year's Eve Special
World Café
Seafood & Steak Dinner Buffet
with Ham & Suckling Pig Carving Station
December 31, 2015, Thursday
6:00pm ~ 9:30pm
$60 per adult & $30 per child 4 ~ 11 years old
Free flow of Red & White Wine, Champagne, American Beer & Juice
New Year's Day Brunch
World Cafe
January 1, 2016, Friday
11:00am ~ 2:00pm
$37 per adult & $18.50 per child 4 ~ 11 years old
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High court affirms aggravated assault convictions

On Dec. 28, 2015, the Supreme Court affirmed the trial court's judgment that convicted Arinna Reiong and Norna Tipingeni of aggravated assault and battery.

In Commonwealth v. Reiong, 2015 MP 13, Reiong and Tipingeni argued that the evidence was insufficient to convict them of aggravated assault and battery, and the trial court erred by failing to read the lesser-included offense instructions to the jury.

Appellants asserted that the victim did not suffer from a "serious bodily injury," an essential element of aggravated assault and battery. "Serious bodily injury," is defined under 6 CMC § 103(o) as an injury that "creates a high probability of death… causes serious permanent disfigurement, or…causes a permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ, or other bodily injury of like severity." In support of their argument, appellants maintain that the "other bodily injury of like severity" phrase of § 103(o) does not broaden the statute, and the victim's injuries did not create a high probability of death, cause serious permanent disfigurement, or cause a permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the a bodily member or organ. Because the victim did not suffer an injury explicitly listed in § 103(o), appellants reasoned that their aggravated assault and battery convictions must be reversed.

In paragraph nine of the opinion, the high court found appellants' interpretation of § 103(o) unpersuasive because proper statutory interpretation seeks to provide meaning to every word of a statute, noting that "[t]he Legislature would not have included the 'other bodily injury of like severity' phrase if it intended for that phrase to be meaningless." The high court held that serious bodily injury under § 103(o) "encompasses not only the injuries explicitly set forth in § 103(o) but also other injuries that are of similar severity."

The high court then stated the injuries suffered by the victim were similar to those sustained by other victims in cases that upheld convictions requiring an elevated form of injury. Specifically, the victim here suffered from the following as a result of the attack: a bloody nose and mouth, difficulty breathing and understanding, an inability to walk, pain when moving her head, headaches and dizziness months after the attack, memory loss, and loss of hair. Furthermore, the Supreme Court acknowledged the attending physician assistant's corroborating testimony regarding the severity of the victim's injuries. Based on the evidence and rulings in other similar cases, the high court concluded that a reasonable juror could have found the evidence sufficient to make a serious bodily injury determination.

Next, appellants argued that the trial court erred by refusing to give a lesser-included offense instruction to the jury. The high court reaffirmed its decision in Commonwealth v. Guiao, 2015 MP 1, stating that the trial court does not err by declining to read to the jury instructions of lesser-included offenses that are bench charges. Like Guiao, the high court concluded that a rational juror could not have convicted the appellants of those charges because those charges were to be determined by the bench—not the jury.

The high court's full opinion is available at http://www.cnmi-law.org/supreme15.html. ***(NMI Judiciary)***

'Unmet needs voices missing from the table'

By DAISY DEMAPAN
daisy_demapan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Reiterating the message from a book given to her by American Red Cross-NMI Chapter director John Hirsch, Commonwealth Advocates for Recovery Efforts director Jenny Hegland stated at the last meeting with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials how the voices of those with unmet needs are missing from the discussion table in their efforts toward recovery.

"It's really got me thinking about big picture strategic questions. I just wanted to share some of this thinking with the group because I would really love everyone's input and ideas in relation to any of these things because our mission is to build a resilient community which will identify and address the long-term unmet needs of individuals impacted by disaster," she said.

What's interesting, she said, is that you can address unmet needs without building a resilient community.

"One of the great things is that there are specific research-based identifiable factors in communities that are resilient. They're able to withstand disaster and prevent more impact from future disaster, which is what we want," she said.

The book, titled *Toxic Charity*, illustrates how public service or even charitable and compassionate efforts can worsen a community.

"A couple of things in this book that I think are really critical is the importance of focusing on outcomes rather than activity. It's really easy to try to look really busy to show everyone what we're doing but at the same time, we want to be strategic and see whether they are the outcomes we are working toward," she said.

The other point, she said, is the importance of the way the organization goes about their work and their decision making process.

"When I was at the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, I asked the audience if they or someone they knew were impacted by the disaster and a very small number raised their hands," she said.

"The voices of those we're trying to serve are missing from this table. The book talks about these ideas of mutuality, reciprocity, and accountability. If we're really going for long-term impact and not just Band-Aid approaches to giving people roofs…those voices, those impacted by disaster really need to become authors of the rules, builders of the community and dispensers of the resources," she said.

The book further illustrates how good intentions can have unintended and dire consequences. In an excerpt from the book about free food and clothing distribution, "[this] encourages ever-growing handout lines, diminishing the dignity of the poor while increasing their dependency. We converge on inner-city neighborhoods to plant flowers and pick up trash, battering the pride of residents who have the capacity and responsibility to beautify their own environment..."

Hegland presented these ideas to the CARE subcommittees, asking them to consider options as they move forward with their mission.

"Sometimes well-intended work can have adverse consequences. So this idea of groups doing for others what they could do for themselves is disempowering and has the ability to take away people's dignity," adding that the organization, "…[must] do this in a way that really honors people at every layer of socio-economic status."

If you'd like to be part of the discussion, call CARE at 783-7790 or log on to www.cnmi-care.com.

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Oleai Sports Complex Track and Field Renovation

Governor Eloy S. Inos and Lt. Governor Ralph DLG. Torres, through the Northern Mariana Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, hereby give notice that NMHC is soliciting sealed bids from interested, licensed companies to provide Construction Services for the **Renovation of the Oleai Sports Complex Track and Field** in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island.

Prospective Bidders or firms may pick up a set of the Project Package beginning **Wednesday, December 9, 2015** at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI and austerity holidays. E-mail of the Project Package set will be allowed and a non-refundable payment is required. A non-refundable payment of **Fifty Dollars ($50.00) is required for each set.** Payment shall be by cash, credit card, money order or cashier's check (payable to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation).

Bidders are also advised that this project is subject to compliance with the Davis-Bacon Act. All wage rates for laborers, mechanics and all other employees performing the work, labor and services on this project shall be paid the current minimum wage or the wage determination for the Commonwealth as specified in CM130001 for the Mariana Islands.

A **mandatory pre-bid conference** will be held at **10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 6, 2016,** at the NMHC Conference Room in Garapan, Saipan. A project site visit will be made as part of the mandatory pre-bid conference for the prospective bidders to familiarize themselves with the required work. Attendance at this pre-bid conference and site visit are considered essential to the prospective bidders' understanding of the project elements and a prospective bidder or company that does not have a representative in attendance at the mandatory pre-bid conference will be considered as a non-responsive bidder.

All inquires shall be in writing and addressed to Mr. Jesse S. Palacios, Corporate Director, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 or faxed to (670) 234-6866. Inquires must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. local time, December 28, 2015.

Sealed Bids must be marked **NMHC IFB 2016-001**. For bidders within the CNMI, an original and three (3) copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Director, Procurement and Supply, Lower Base Drive, Saipan, no later than **10:00 a.m. local time, Friday, January 22, 2016.** Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid. Notices of Intent to Bid must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than 10:00a.m., local time, January 22, 2016 and must be the transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515 or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com For bidders located outside of the CNMI, an original and three (3) copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S Postal Service or the official government postal service no later than **Friday, January 22, 2016** and the ITB documents must be received at the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base Drive no later than **Tuesday, February 2, 2016**. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicity opened and read aloud at the Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, at **10:00 a.m. .local time, Wednesday, February 3, 2016.** However if no noticed of intent to bid are received from bidders outside of the CNMI, the bids will be opened at **10:30 a.m., local time, Friday, January 22, 2016.**

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars ($25,000.00), a bid security of fifteen percent (15%) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. This security may be in the form of a Certified Check, Cashier's Check, or Bid Bond. Checks must be made payable to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC), with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check. Surety companies must hold a Certificate of Authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable le to the Attorney General.

Bidding procedures shall be in compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, however, Article 7, "Local Business Preference" is not available to local bidders in this procurement because its use is prohibited by the Federal law granting the funding for this project.

The bidder submitting the lowest responsible bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the lowest CNMI Procurement Regulations NMIAC Section 70-30.3-245. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract price. Pursuant to Governor's Directive 251 dated March 15, 2006, bidders are required to include a Clearance from the Office of the Insurance Commissioner with respect to the financial bonding capability of the bidders' chosen Surety.

Performance time for completion of this project is One Hundred Fifty (150) calendar days. Liquidated damages will be assessed at One Hundred Twenty Five Dollars (US$125.00) per calendar day for delays beyond the established completion date.

This project is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), under its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds provided to the commonwealth. This project is also subject to section 3 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1968 which requires recipients of HUD funds and the contractors to help insure that the economic opportunities generated by these HUD funds are provided to local low-income residents and the business that serve them "to the maximum extent feasible".

NMHC hereby notifies bidders that it will affirmatively insure that in any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, women and small business enterprises will be affordable full opportunity to submit proposals and will not be discriminated against on grounds of race, color, national origin, political affiliation, creed, sex, religion, age, familial status, and disability status.

All documents received shall be the sole property of the NMHC with the exception of the Bid Bond, Certified Check, or Cashier's Check, which will be returned to the proposers after the acceptance and award of contract to the successful contractor.

The Government reserves the right to reject and all proposals and to waive and defects in the said proposals, if in the sole opinion of NMHC, to do so would be in its best interest. All proposals will become the property of the Government.

For information, contact Mr. Jesse S. Palacios, Corporate Director or Mr. Jacob Muna, Planner/Environmental Officer at (670) 234-6866/7689 during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI and austerity holidays.

/s/ Edward C. Sablan
NMHC Board Chairman & Contracting Officer

/s/ Herman S. Sablan, Director
Division of Procurement & Supply

CLEAN AS YOU GO JON PEREZ
This is just a portion of the trash left inside the crevices of the dock at the Chalan Kanoa beach. The ocean's current could sweep away the garbage once high tide sets in.

Post-clearance audits useful tool if implemented in the NMI—Customs

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

DENNIS B. CHAN
Customs officer Patrick Camacho holds up a certificate he earned after completing a recent audit workshop in Suva, Fiji.

A CNMI Divisions of Customs officer recently attended a post-clearance audit workshop in Suva, Fiji, to help customs officers from all over the world learn better revenue collection and risk assessment methods.

Customs officer Patrick Camacho said a post-clearance audit, also known as PCA, is essentially an area of law that would give Customs the authority to enter any business to obtain any records for audit purposes, and potentially show if these businesses were "honest" in giving the values of their goods at CNMI ports.

"That is not yet applicable here but it's a good concept," said CNMI Customs Division director Jose Mafnas in a recent interview.

During the workshop in Fiji in late November, Camacho said one officer from the Cook Islands shared they had done a PCA on cigarettes and were able to collect over $200,000.

Camacho said when the Cook Islands officer looked at their records, they saw a discrepancy in how a business was giving the value to Customs. Giving the wrong values basically lowered the taxes Customs assessed.

"We do not have the authority," said Camacho. "There are workarounds, through warrants and subpoenas, but if PCA was implemented here in the CNMI, it would require businesses to keep records for a certain amount of years and that amount of years, Customs could come in any time and collect document and records. It is a really detailed audit."

Right now, Camacho said, CNMI Customs does "desk audits," or transaction-based audits on documents done during cargo clearance at the port. But with PCA, Camacho said, it would allow Customs to get their hands on bank records, businesses' accounting books, or basically any data for their business to do their accounting.

"And hopefully, we implement that program in the CNMI. Because I am sure applying for warrants and subpoenas would take time. If we had PCA it would greatly lower that time frame of gathering documents to do more detailed audits," Camacho told *Saipan Tribune* this month.

"The problem here is manpower," Camacho added, as the workshop—sponsored and paid for by the Oceania Customs Organization, of which the CNMI is a member—recommends a three-man team to conduct the audit.

Camacho said he is the sole person in Customs designated to strictly do desk audits, with other officers helping when they complete their specific assignments.

Camacho was one of several other Customs officers who completed "Intelligence Analysis" and "rules of origin" training last month, sponsored by the Oceania Customs Organization.

Public warned of gusty winds, waves

Based on information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center, moderate to fresh trade winds with frequent gusts to near gale force and combined seas of 8 to 10 feet will persist for the next few days. As a result a small craft advisory has been issued.

The small craft advisory is now in effect until 6pm Thursday.

East winds of 15 to 20 knots with frequent gusts to 30 knots will continue through Thursday. These winds are already occurring in the Northern Marianas and will spread into Guam waters by last night.

These winds are beginning to create waves of 7 to 9 feet. The waves will likely build to between 8 and 10 feet during the day or tonight.

The public and inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, are being advised to avoid sailing in these conditions. If travel by boat is necessary, exercise caution when entering or leaving harbors and inlets. ***(EOC)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUTS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Happy 1st birthday to our beautiful baby girl, Alexis Marie! We love you very much! Love, Mommy, Daddy, Jadine, and Damon.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Belated happy birthday greeting to Jener Franz Pineda, who turned 6 yesterday. We hope all your dreams come true. Stay sweet as you are and we love you very much. God bless. Love, Mommy, Daddy, Kuya J.P., and baby girl.

NEW YEAR'S
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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Every bite you take matters

Every day dieters are bombarded by flashing alerts and wheedling pleas from command centers in brain and stomach.

You know you shouldn't indulge too much in calorie-laden holiday delicacies that instantly inflate the waistline. But then there's that urgent signal that you must try that chocolate-clad peppermint-sprinkled graham cookie. Just a nibble. Come on. Or that velvety key lime pie. Or that hipster delicacy, fresh homemade buttermilk biscuits with your favorite cholesterol-rich toppings, such as ginger sage sausage and cheddar cheese.

Result: A nation of dieters, desperate to lose the last 10 or the first 50, seeks fresh ways to cheat the unforgiving math of calories.

Enter "intuitive eating." The theory here is that your body knows what it is doing when it urges you to indulge. Instead of dieting, just heed the body's signals, such as feelings of hunger, and of course, fullness. Eat when you're hungry. Stop when you're full. Simple.

Researchers tested that theory in a recently published study that pitted calorie-counters against intuitive eaters. The results were, well, intuitive. Those who counted calories lost more weight than those who listened to their bodies. Almost all, however, eventually gained most of the weight back and some of the intuitive eaters ended the six-week study weighing more than when they started, Judith Anglin, associate professor of nutrition at Texas Southern University, tells us.

Conclusion: Argh.

In another study, scientists tested a variation on the theme: Instead of monitoring calories, just limit your bites.

Brigham Young University health sciences associate professor Josh West recruited 61 overweight or obese men to test the bite theory. Not surprisingly 16 dropped out in the first week. Who wants to keep a running tally of every bite? Or be tempted to wolf down a burger in three bites just to keep the daily tally low?

What a perfect way to ruin a meal.

Upshot: Intuitive eaters "do improve their psychological well-being and have less body dissatisfaction, but they don't necessarily lose weight," Dr. Lisa Neff, assistant professor of endocrinology at Northwestern University Feinberg Medical School, tells us.

One recent breakthrough: Scientists discovered how a gene switches on or off the production of so-called "brown fat," which may explain why some people can eat more and still stay trim. Brown fat doesn't store calories like the more common white fat but instead burns excess calories and releases that energy as heat. Leaner people have more brown fat than do heavier people.

Still, what we know about dieting is what we knew: Calories matter. What you eat matters. How much you exercise matters.

Listening to your body is fine, as long as you really listen. There's no antidote to eating when you're full—come on, admit it, we all do—or gorging for entertainment. Or as a form of therapy.

Fewer bites? Sure. But that won't help if every one of them is chocolate cheesecake.

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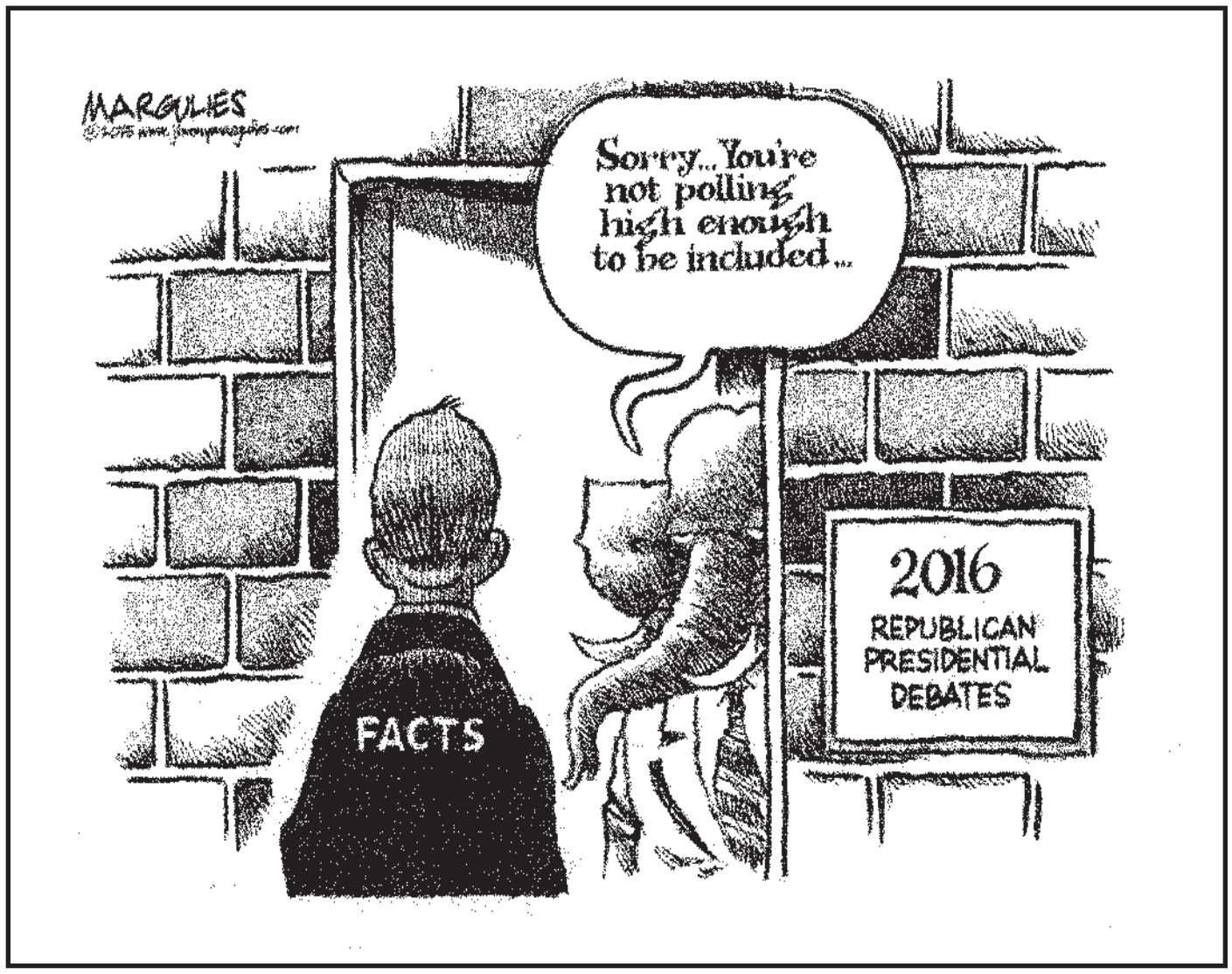


It's game time! Regifting stupid candidate quotes

By MARTIN SCHRAM
Tribune News Service

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive. Readers may send him email at martin.schram@gmail.com.

As our holiday season morphs from the joy of gift-giving into the ritual of regifting—(and since the lines to see "Star Wars" are way too long, anyway)—let's amuse ourselves by playing a new seasonal parlor game we've just invented.

It tests each player's mastery of the art of regifting clueless candidate quotations. It is based, of course, on the seasonably fashionable (but never-spoken) premise that sometimes it is far more satisfying to regift than receive.

We're calling our game: "Clueless."

Here's how to play: First, we choose a stupid quotation recently uttered by a famous but clearly clueless political personality. Second, we regift that stupid quote to the prime opponent of the original speaker. Finally, we all try to guess how the original speaker would have responded if a leading opponent said that mind-boggling thing.

Here we go. For today's game, I've chosen to focus on the one political personality any casual news media consumer might assume was the only political person speaking this year: Donald Trump.

(As you play other rounds of "Clueless" this holiday season, you'll find the campaign has gifted you with ample examples of outrageous quotations, including: Hillary Clinton's assertions that media fact-checkers adorned with thumbs down or Pinocchio noses growing; and a growing list of truth-test failures run up by Republicans including Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Carla Fiorina, Jeb!, and the pack of single-digit bottom-feeders. Also, of course, Trump's vast replenishing resource of other truth-test failures.)

So many mind-numbing Trump quotations; so little time (and oped space). But my choice is Trump's recent impassioned defense of Russian President Vladimir Putin's global conduct and moral leadership. I chose Trump's repeated defense of Putin because of its extensive blood-spattered context: Putin used military muscle to forcibly annex Crimea and arm and train Ukrainian separatist rebel forces. He gave those separatists missiles—one of which allegedly shot down a Malaysian airliner over Ukraine, killing 298 people. Inside Russia, Putin was widely accused of being behind assassinations of opponents and journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported 56 Russian and international journalists were killed in Russia since 1992.)

Yet Trump swelled with pride after a Dec. 17 press conference where Putin said of Trump: "He's a really brilliant and talented person, without any doubt ... the absolute leader in the presidential race. ... He says he wants to move on to a new, more substantial relationship, a deeper relationship with Russia. ... Of course we welcome that."

Trump rewarded Putin's praise by not only praising Russia's strongman—but shamelessly defending Putin in those killings of opponents and journalists.

But today's game is all about regifting his words. So we'll regift all Trump's praise of Putin to Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton and pretend she said all that.

For instance: the day after Putin's press conference, Trump praised Putin as "a leader" on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" show and made clear he was thrilled to be praised by Russia's president. When host Joe Scarborough pointedly noted Putin was accused of the murders of political opponents and journalists, Trump actually defended Putin. But you must pretend you heard Clinton say the words Trump actually uttered: "I think our country does plenty of killing also, Joe, so you know. There's a lot of stupidity going on in the world right now, a lot of killing, a lot of stupidity."

Unbelievable. Also unthinkable that at any time in the last half century a Republican presidential candidate would have said such a thing. Perhaps you think maybe it was a momentary gaffe. But no. Two days later, on ABC's "This Week," Trump sounded an even stronger defense when pressed again about Russia's president being accused of murdering opponents and journalists. So, imagine you heard Clinton saying the words Trump uttered: "Nobody has proven that he has killed anyone. ... He's always denied it. It's never been proven that he killed anybody."

Now, we must guess: What would GOP front-runner Trump—or any other top Republicans, from today's presidential candidates to former nominees John McCain and Mitt Romney, have said if Clinton had dared speak Trump's words?

You know the answer: McCain, Romney, all the presidential pack and those shameless GOP haters on the House Benghazi Committee would have blasted Clinton or any Democrat who dared to suck up to Putin like that. And Trump would have led the attacks! He'd probably be blasting Clinton as a spineless leftist unfit to be president—if she had dared to say what he actually and repeatedly said.

If you came to that answer, congratulations—you've started 2016 as a winner!

And that may be more than anyone will be saying about The Donald when they start counting the real 2016 votes for president. Trump may have finally gone too far. Even for those way too tolerant, way too desperate, Republican voters.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Disposition of public land

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune *and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands. All views expressed by the author are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion and stance of the* Saipan Tribune.

Thoughtful folks have floored my senses on an issue that has eluded my mind since 1978. They asked who owns the public land throughout the archipelago. The simple answer is: The Indigenous People.

Next, then why are some government agencies granted land that enable them to make money from indigenous land? Had to dig back the genesis of the decision.

Apparently, delegates to the first NMI Constitutional Convention acquiesced to the arrangement without much thought to actual landownership. Even they are not owners of the land! Therefore, they should have allowed for negotiations that leaves disposition of public land solely to DPL.

The current arrangement robs indigenous landowners of money being made by government agencies in the lease of public land under their charge. This constitutional anomaly must change! Are these agencies owners of public land? Are they required to submit money made to MLPT? It's the money of the indigenous people, folks!

No matter how you dice it, delegates never had the authority to issue land grants. That they braved ignorance is not a reason to dispose of indigenous land. That they made it a constitutional provision doesn't legally change the definition of indigenous landownership either. We want disposition of our land done legally!

Ownership confusion must be resolved once and for all by realigning management, use and disposition of indigenous public land. Nobody owns public land other than the indigenous people!

Severing: The threat by the FSM to sever ties with the United States piqued interest throughout the region, especially those that have already relocated from the country.

The FSM national legislators pointed out cuts in funds under the Compact that was done unilaterally by the U.S. in the midst of a binding agreement. It seems U.S. action was gift-wrapped in arrogance that infuriated FSM leadership. They pointed to the Compact, basically a treaty, between two sovereign governments. It's a matter of fiduciary responsibility.

The U.S. must abide by the pact from a holistic perspective and totality of its relationship with the FSM. Can't employ AWOL on provisions that are especially sensitive.

Be that as it may, islanders leave home primarily for the education of their children and opportunities that are scarce back home. Moving to a new place is very difficult but nothing stops their aspirations for greener pasture.

Loss of culture: There's a resurgent sentiment about indigenous culture. Interesting, though, how we assault the same from dawn to dusk.

The last vehicle to perpetuating what's known as indigenous peoplehood (our unique identity as a people) is assaulted from the first break of dawn.

A survey taken in recent past found that 90 percent of Chamorro households use English as the means of communication. It seems a perfect recipe to bid Chamorro *adios*. Its non-use coupled with the invasion of modern technological devices like iPhones usually found today in the hands of young kids fast tracks the death of the vernacular.

PSS has done a superb job teaching the vernacular in the classroom. But its lessons already once removed from its primary domiciliary—the home front. In short, relegating it to the classroom is to teach it as a second language. Isn't it the primary lingo of indigenous kids? Shouldn't education of our vernacular begin at home?

There's nothing wrong learning the business and career language in English. But this need not shove aside what makes us unique as Chamorros. Weren't we born with it? Is there a reason to skip it altogether? Isn't this a parental duty?

I have nothing but admiration for those who pick up the responsibility to instill the use of our language among our children. It's a healthy start that gives kids an idea of who and what they are in a multicultural setting. It's a tough job when the current of events head in the opposite direction.

This effort must be used as widely as possible. The survival of our language and what's left of our cultural tradition is reliant upon what we do henceforth to ensure it lives forever more. We have a language; let's use it. There are cultures where its own language is missing 200 years ago with regret that its people never learned their native tongue. Let's not turn shipwrecks out of negligence! Let's revive it! Let's begin at home!

The CNMI deserves competent and trustworthy leaders

By JOSE S. DELA CRUZ
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

For four centuries after Ferdinand Magellan's voyage around the world, the Northern Mariana Islands were colonized successively by three world powers: Spain, Germany, and Japan. During that long period of time, the people of the islands had no power, political or otherwise. They were simply governed without their consent. They became subjects of the colonial governments that exercised complete control over them.

After World War II ended, the islands became a ward of the United Nations under trusteeship status, with the United States as the administering authority. Twenty-five years into the trusteeship, we had the unique opportunity to freely choose our own political status. After several years of political status negotiations, we voted, overwhelmingly, in 1975 to become a member of the American political family, under a "commonwealth" arrangement.

A fundamental aspect of our commonwealth relationship with the United States is our right as people of the Northern Marianas to govern ourselves. This is the "right to self-government" that we, every now and then, would point to whenever we want to remind the federal government of the central feature of our commonwealth relationship.

Under the political arrangement that we negotiated with the United States, we began governing ourselves on Jan. 9, 1978. That was the day our first elected public officials took their oath of office in the executive and legislative branches of the CNMI government.

Thirty-eight years have now passed since we began governing ourselves under our own constitution. As a member of the American political family, though, we are mindful that, under the terms of the Covenant, we have placed ourselves under the sovereignty of the United States, our adopted homeland. This is the reason why the provisions of the United States Constitution generally apply to the Northern Marianas, except as noted in the Covenant agreement.

■■■

During the first 25 years of commonwealth government, our leaders carried out satisfactorily their duties and responsibilities under our Constitution and laws. Over the past 10 years, however, an unhealthy political development started to take place in the CNMI. We began to see a decline in the quality of governance by CNMI public officials. "Lackluster" and "mediocre" are words that we have used at times to criticize their sub-par performance. Both of these terms, however, have to do with issues of competency and ability. But during the last six years, the decline in quality of governance has worsened from issues of competency and ability to issues of integrity and honesty.

About six years ago, we began to see our public officials commit more violations of law and breach of the public trust. Many of these violations were essentially acts of political corruption. As a result, we began to see a marked decline in the quality of CNMI governance. Such downward turn in the quality of governance has continued to get worse. Acts of corruption by CNMI public officials are now taking place openly and, sometimes, flagrantly. We have looked in shock and astonishment at such shameful turn in CNMI public governance, because we had never experienced such egregious misconduct by CNMI public officials previously. Let me try to explain.

Over the past six years, we began seeing the commission of intentional malfeasance and misconduct by CNMI public officials. These acts constituted either actual violations of law or a breach of the public trust, or both.

As a result of such wrongdoings, we have seen the fall from grace of many of our high public officials. For example, we have seen a sitting governor, a sitting lieutenant governor, an appointed attorney general, two sitting senators, a sitting mayor and a number of other public officials indicted, convicted, and sent to prison for violating either federal law or Commonwealth law. Many of these violations of law were essentially acts of corruption. *(Interestingly, for previously pointing out such acts of corruption, this writer has been accused that he is the one who is corrupt, presumably for reminding the people of the CNMI of the infectious and harmful nature of corruption in public office.)*

■■■

Two years ago, the CNMI casino industry was implemented by our elected officials with the enactment into law of the exclusive casino gaming legislation. The *legislative* enactment of this industry intentionally and willfully disregarded two previous *Commonwealth-wide referenda* that had prohibited a casino industry in the CNMI. Sadly, however, the casino legislation is now the law and will remain the law until it is repealed. But the manner in which this unwelcome law was passed by members of the 19th CNMI Legislature was very disturbing because it never had the backing of the people of the CNMI.

In tandem with the governor and lieutenant governor, the members of the present 19th Commonwealth Legislature, against the express wishes of the people of the Commonwealth, went ahead and passed the exclusive casino gaming legislation. This act of defiance by our lawmaking body has since cast serious doubt on the integrity and trustworthiness of our present lawmakers, including the governor and lieutenant governor who were very instrumental in the passage of this legislation.

As if that were not enough, soon after the unwelcome enactment of the exclusive casino legislation two years ago, a sinister political development began taking place in the CNMI. We started seeing the intrusion into and influence-peddling by certain investors in the official affairs of the CNMI government.

At no time in the history of the Commonwealth have we seen investors come into the CNMI and literally begin telling our elected leaders what to do. The people of the CNMI have stared in shock and disbelief at the audacity of these investors as they openly and flagrantly try to curry favor from CNMI public officials.

The people of the CNMI, for some time now, have been frustrated and disgusted over the way our elected officials have literally bowed in public to these unscrupulous investors. Without hesitation or second thought, our public officials have gone out of their way to accommodate the requests of these investors: for public land acquisitions, for amendments to the zoning law restrictions, for changes in existing legislations, and so forth (even allowing these investors to run and operate many of our public events and festivities). And they continue to do so openly and unashamedly.

■■■

2016 is an election year. I believe it is critical for the people of the Commonwealth *to start thinking now* about our present state of affairs and the future of the Commonwealth. Do we want private investors and interests to run our government? Do we want our elected officials to continue being manipulated by private investors and interests? Are our present elected leaders serving the people of the CNMI, or have they lost sight of their constitutional duties and responsibilities? What is the point of electing leaders to serve in our executive and legislative branches when, after the election, they end up being manipulated by private investors, instead of promoting the best interests of the people?

I believe it is high time for the people of the CNMI to soberly assess what has been happening in the CNMI government. I also believe that, after serious reflection regarding what our elected leaders have been doing over the past two years, the people of the CNMI will agree that our leaders have lost sight of the fact that their primary mission as public servants is to promote the best interests of the people of the CNMI, not the private interest of unscrupulous investors and individuals.

There is no question whatsoever that people of the Commonwealth deserve competent, trustworthy, and conscientious leaders. We deserve leaders who understand that their duty and responsibility, first and foremost, is to serve the people. When our elected leaders fail to do so, they must be replaced by those who will. Otherwise, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

So for 2016, are we ready to take on the challenge of voting into office only those individuals who are competent and trustworthy, and who are truly serious about serving the people of the CNMI? In order to see this happen, we need to begin formulating a realistic voting strategy that will ensure a *change in leadership* in the Legislature in 2016 and in the executive and legislative branches in 2018.

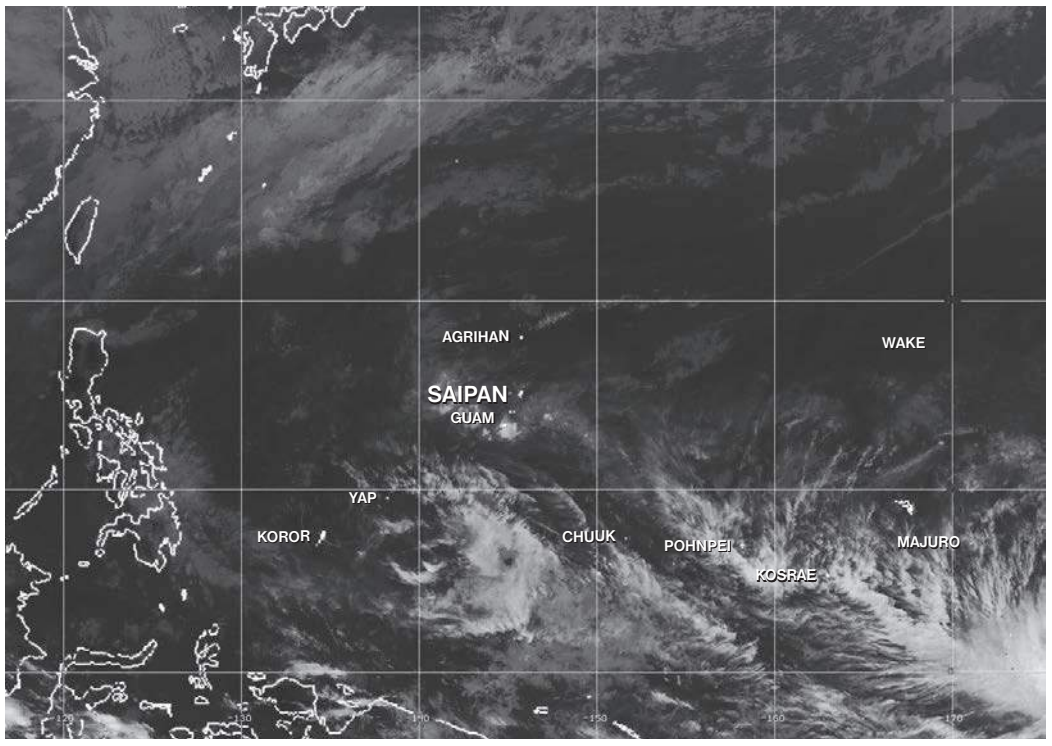
Jose S. Dela Cruz is a former justice of the CNMI Supreme Court.

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲87° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2015
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough extends eastward through 1N130E to the equator at 177E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are seen southeast of Yap and south of Chuuk within 150 miles of a line from 6N141E to 5N149E to 2N156E and south of Majuro near Tarawa south of a line from 2N167E to 5N180.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

Micronesia

Guam And Rota	Showers	▲85	▼78
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲88	▼77
Yap	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼78
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	▲86	▼79
Pohnpei	Mostly Cloudy	▲87	▼79
Kosrae	Showers	▲85	▼80
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	▲85	▼80

Around the Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲76	▼61
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	▲40	▼21
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	▲65	▼58
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	▲82	▼71
London	Partly Cloudy	▲53	▼47
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	▲58	▼39
Manila	Sunny	▲88	▼70
Melbourne	Sunny	▲79	▼54
Miami	Showers	▲82	▼75
New York	Mostly Cloudy	▲42	▼38
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	▲49	▼37
Paris	Showers	▲54	▼40
Pusan	Mostly Sunny	▲48	▼30
Rome	Sunny	▲59	▼39
Salem	Cloudy	▲45	▼34
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	▲53	▼43
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲39	▼24
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲52	▼36
Washington, DC	Cloudy	▲46	▼43

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Tides

Saipan Harbor

4:09 AM	Today	Low Tide:	-0.2 Feet
11:03 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet
4:59 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
9:36 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.7 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Wednesday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Thursday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:57 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	9:25 PM	9:27 AM
Wednesday	10:15 PM	10:09 AM
Thursday	11:03 PM	10:50 AM
Friday	11:50 PM	11:28 AM
Saturday		12:06 PM

Note: Blank spaces indicate that a rising or a setting did not occur during that 24-hour interval.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 4, 2015

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA2924	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA2922	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA2921	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA2920	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA2928	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA2926	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA2921	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA2921	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ628	3:50am	7:40am	Daily
7C3403	4:35am	8:30am	Daily
7C3401	4:30pm	8:25pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	5:30am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA2924/191	4:15am	9:00am	3, 6 via GUM
UA2924/PR111	4:15am	9:20am	1, 2, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2924/183	4:15am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA2924/183	4:15am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2922/183	8:40am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA2922/183	8:40am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2921/183	1:30pm	9:30pm	5 via Rota-GUM
UA2921/183	1:30pm	9:50pm	1, 4, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA5038/183	2:20pm	9:30pm	2 via GUM
UA5038/183	2:20pm	9:50pm	3, 6 via GUM
UA5072/191	9:50pm	7:20am+1	1, 6 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ628/721	3:50am	12:50am	Daily via ICN
UA2924/159	4:15am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA2922/159	8:40am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA2921/159	1:30pm	10:35pm	1, 5 via Rota-GUM
UA2920/159	2:20pm	10:35pm	3, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA2923	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA2925	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA2921	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA2920	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA2927	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA2929	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA2920	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA2920	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:35am	3:10pm	Daily

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
OZ627	9:30pm	2:50am+1	Daily
7C3404	10:10pm	3:30am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:30pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA190/2929	9:55am	9:20pm	2, 6, 7 via GUM
UA190/2929	10:00am	9:20pm	3 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ702/627	12:30pm	2:50am+1	Daily via ICN
PR110/UA2925	10:05pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2925	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2921	10:55pm	1:00pm+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2920	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	1 via GUM-Rota
UA184/2927	10:55pm	5:35pm+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2929	10:55pm	9:20pm+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2925	11:59pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/2920	11:59pm	1:50pm+1	2, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA184/2927	11:59pm	5:35pm+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/2929	11:59pm	9:20pm+1	2, 5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ724/627	2:20pm	2:50am+1	Daily via ICN
UA116/2925	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA116/2921	10:55pm	1:00pm+1	3, 6 via GUM
UA116/2920	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	1, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA116/2927	10:55pm	5:35pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA116/2929	10:55pm	9:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju AirETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
6:30AM	6:45AM	Mon, Tue,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

Nominations being sought for 2016 longest married couple

The annual search for the longest married couple project sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, the original faith-based marriage enrichment program in this country, enters the family Christmas and New Year's season with nominations having been received from the majority of states and territories.

"As we have done the last five years, Worldwide Marriage Encounter will honor the national longest married couple as well as the longest married couple from each state and territory. Based on what we are currently seeing, many family members, along with longtime friends, are nominating couples for the award," said Dick and Diane Baumbach and Fr. Dick Morse, the coordinators for the project. "We know that traditionally families get together during the holiday period…a perfect time to nominate parents or grandparents who have been married for a long time."

Couples can also nominate themselves for the recognition.

"We plan to continue an added feature to this project by sending a special letter of recognition to each couple nominated so that they and their families can highlight the achievement of their long marriage. The letters will be sent during the 2016 Valentine's season," the coordinators said.

Plans call for Joe and Sue Talarico and Fr. Tom Ogg, Worldwide Marriage Encounter's United States Ecclesial Team, to personally present the longest married couple with special gifts from the Worldwide Marriage Encounter movement during the February 2016 Valentine's Week. The winners will be presented their certificates of achievement along with other gifts by Worldwide Marriage Encounter couples.

Nominations, which are open to all husband and wife couples regardless of faith expression, may be submitted by email to CNMI Area Ecclesial Team.

The contact information for sending in a nomination, which simply requires the name of the couple, their wedding date and where they currently reside (village) plus a phone or email address for the individual nominating them, is as follows: Charles and Cathy Cepeda (csablancepeda@gmail.com or 483-7000) or Fr. Ike Ayuyu (ikeayuyu@gmail.com or 483-4543). Nominations must be received by Jan. 10, 2016.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter has been offering weekend experiences for over 47 years and is considered the original faith-based *marriage enrichment* program. The programs are continually updated to keep abreast of changes in society, and WWME now offers evening and half-day programs that are presented at parishes and other church facilities. The weekend program, traditionally presented as an overnight experience at a hotel or retreat center, can also be presented at the parish where the couples return to their homes in the evenings. WWME has a presence in almost 100 countries, which makes it the largest pro-marriage movement in the world. In North America, the WWME programs are presented in English, Spanish, French, and Korean languages.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter offers married couples the opportunity to spend time together away from the busyness of the world to focus on each other. It offers tools for building and maintaining a strong, Christian marriage in today's world. To learn more about the Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends online, go to wwme.org, or call WWME CNMI Area Ecclesial Team: Charles and Cathy Cepeda at 483-7000 or Fr. Ike Ayuyu at 483-4543. ***(WWME)***

Reps sought for Head Start Policy Council

The Head Start Program is actively seeking one representative each from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to serve as a community representative for the school year 2015-2016 Head Start Policy Council.

Qualification requirements

Community representatives must be from the local community who are familiar with resources and services for low-income children and families; they cannot be an employee or immediate relative of an employee of the CNMI Public School System; and they may not have already served three terms on the Head Start Policy Council.

Duties and responsibilities

The Policy Councils must work in partnership with key management staff and the governing body to develop, review, and approve or disapprove the following policies and procedures:

■ All funding applications and amendments to funding applications Head Start, including administrative services, prior to the submission of such applications to the Department of Health and Human Services;

■ Procedures describing how the governing body and the appropriate policy group will implement shared decision-making;

■ Procedures for program planning in accordance with this part and the requirements of 45 CFR 1305.3;

■ The program's philosophy and long- and short-range program goals and objectives;

■ The composition of the Policy Council and the procedures by which policy group members are chosen;

■ Criteria for defining recruitment, selection, and enrollment priorities, in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR part 1305;

■ The annual self-assessment of the grantee or delegate agency's progress in carrying out the programmatic and fiscal intent of its grant application, including planning or other actions that may result from the review of the annual audit and findings from the Federal monitoring review (see 45 CFR 1304.51(i)(1) for additional requirements about the annual self-assessment);

■ Program personnel policies and subsequent changes to those policies, in accordance with 45 CFR 1301.31, including standards of conduct for program staff, consultants, and volunteers;

■ Decisions to hire or terminate the Head Start director of the grantee agency; and

■ Decisions to hire or terminate any person who works primarily for the Head Start program of the grantee agency.

In addition, Policy Councils must perform the following functions directly:

■ Serve as a link to the Parent Committees, grantee agency governing bodies, public and private organizations, and the communities they serve;

■ Assist Parent Committees in communicating with parents enrolled in all program options to ensure that they understand their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in Head Start and to encourage their participation in the program;

■ Assist Parent Committees in planning, coordinating, and organizing program activities for parents with the assistance of staff, and ensuring that funds set aside from program budgets are used to support parent activities;

■ Assist in recruiting volunteer services from parents, community residents, and community organizations, and assist in the mobilization of community resources to meet identified needs; and

■ Establish and maintain procedures for working with the grantee or delegate agency to resolve community complaints about the program.

The Head Start Policy Council meets on a monthly basis. Interested community members should email a brief letter of interest and resume to jolene.guerrero@cnmipss.org.

The deadline for interest is Monday, Jan. 4, 2016. The election of Community Representatives aill be held at the regular meeting of the Head Start Policy Council in January.

For more information, contact the program's Family & Community Partnership manager, Jolene Guerrero, at jolene.guerrero@cnmipss.org or call 323-7446/7447/664-3751. ***(PR)***

PACIFIC ISLANDS CLUB SAIPAN

We are seeking for high energy individuals with a positive, can do attitude.
Pacific Islands Club, Saipan is inviting qualified, U.S. workers to apply for the following positions:

(1) ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT
Minimum of two (2) years of work experience, preferably in hospitality and knowledge of generally accepted accounting and bookkeeping principles and procedures. Degree in accounting is required. Strong knowledge in using front office systems and point-of-sale systems such as Opera Property Management System and Micros POS. Must be able to work evenings, C-shift (for night audit reliever 11PM-7AM), weekends and holidays.

(1) ASSISTANT FRONT OFFICE MANAGER
Assists with the Front Office operations, including a Call Center, Concierge, Tour Desk and Guest Service operations; Must have the ability to train employees to ensure standards of the hotel are met. Minimum of five (5) years of hotel/hospitality is required. Minimum of two (2) years of previous experience managing the Front Office of a hotel is required. Excellent written and oral communication skills are necessary. Must be able to solve guest complaints and work in a high-pressured environment. Must be able to speak and understand one or more of the following languages: Korean, Japanese or Russian; Must be able to work graveyard shifts, evenings, weekends, and holidays.

(2) BARTENDER
Minimum one (1) year of related work experience; Must be at least 21 years old. Ability to speak Chinese, Korean, Russian or Japanese is preferred. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) CHINESE COOK
Minimum of two (2) years related work experience in preparing Chinese cuisine. Must be able to coordinate and support team members within the kitchen department. Must be able to communicate clearly in English. Must be able to work evenings, weekends, and holidays.

CLUBMATES
Applicants must have previous related work experience and must pass all American Red Cross Lifeguard requirements (including a 300 yard continuous swim test); Sports-minded individuals are encouraged to apply; Must possess good verbal and written communication skills; Korean, Japanese and/or Russian language skill is a plus; Paid training and free two year lifeguard certification course for eligible candidates; Must be able to work on evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) COOK
Minimum of one (1) year related work experience. Must be able to work evenings, weekends, and holidays.

(1) ELECTRICIAN
Minimum of five (5) years work experience. Must be able to work shifts, weekends, and holidays.

(1) FRONT DESK CLERK
Minimum of one (1) year work experience, preferably in hospitality. Previous cashiering experience required. Fluency in Korean, Russian and/or Japanese languages is preferred. Must be able to work evenings, graveyard shifts, weekends and holidays.

(1) ENTERTAINMENT MANAGER
Applicant must have previous choreography and dance experience with at least one year in a similar role. Must be versed in a wide variety of dance styles. Previous teaching experience is preferred. Must be versed in music editing programs and be able to learn how to operate the equipment in the PIC sound booth. Must be a certified American Red Cross lifeguard or be able to pass all American Red Cross Lifeguard requirements (including a 300 yard continuous swim test) in order to achieve certification. Strong communication, interpersonal and customer service skills are essential. Must have working knowledge of Microsoft Office with the ability to work well under pressure. Strong attention to detail and the ability to work under deadlines are necessary qualifications for the Entertainment Manager. Must be versed in all aspects of the "CLUBMATE" position as they will also be scheduled shifts in and around the beach/waterpark. Korean, Japanese and/or Russian language skills preferred. Must be able to work a flexible schedule including early morning hours, nights, weekends and holidays.

(1) HVAC TECHNICIAN
Minimum of four (4) years related work experience. Must be able to work evenings, weekends, and holidays.

(1) KOREAN COOK
Must have at least a minimum 2 years of related experience with Korean cuisine and ingredients. Must have previous experience in high volume production including large banquets, functions and special events. High School Diploma or higher is required. Must be able to work early mornings, nights, weekends, and holidays.

(1) MERCHANDISE COORDINATOR
Minimum of one (1) year of work experience handling clerical work involved with receiving, storing, stocking, inventory and distribution of supplies for the Boutiki store. Must have good computer skills and have the ability to bend, lift, carry, push, reach and handle inventory supplies weighing 50-75 pounds. Must have the ability to speak, read and comprehend the English language. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) MUSICIAN
Minimum two (2) years experience as a musician; Must be able to perform music in English as well as Japanese/Korean/Russian; Need to be able to play a variety of music genres, classical, pop, rock, reggae, country etc. Must be able to play on an individual, duo and trio basis; At least one member must be a classical pianist, playing classical music during restaurant dining hours. Must be able to host events, MC events, be able to promote audience participation during sing-a-long shows. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays. May be subject to audition.

(1) NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
Minimum of five (5) years experience in the IT industry. Thorough knowledge of all software and hardware is required; this includes all Microsoft Windows desktop and server operating systems, Microsoft application support, SQL 2005 administration skills, Symantec Product experience with Ghost, ACT! And corporate anti-virus software, Access database and report design skills with IIS, ASP and HTML Skills. Linux skills and Active Directory experience is highly desirable. Experience in the use of electronic mail (mail relays, spam filters and mail integrity) and Internet protocols (e.g. TCP/IP, PPP and IMAP). Sound knowledge of routers, firewalls, network security, network configuration and construction, switches and fiber is required. Applicant should have in depth knowledge of VPN, VPN encryption, PC and server hardware, new PC and server installations, configuration and support, System backups and general network administration.

(1) POWERHOUSE OPERATOR
Minimum of three (3) years related work experience. Certified Water Treatment and Distribution Operator preferred. Must be a certified Class A/B UST operator. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) POWERHOUSE SUPERVISOR
Minimum three (3) years experience in diesel power generator operations and one (1) year of supervisory experience. Must be a certified Water Treatment operator Class 2 and Water Distribution Class 1. Must be certified Class A/B UST operator. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(2) SALES ASSOCIATE
Seeking a highly motivated sales associates to join our team. The ideal candidate will have customer service experience and be able to work flexible hours. Bilingual in Japanese, Korean or Russian a plus. Previous Retail experience preferred, but we are willing to train. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

(1) WAITSTAFF
Minimum of three (3) months of work experience. Must be able to work evenings, weekends and holidays.

Applications must be received by 5:00pm on Thursday, January 7th, 2016
PIC applications are available at the PIC Security Desk by the Loading Dock/Employee Entrance.
Incomplete applications will NOT be accepted or considered.
PIC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Nearly 70 avail of USP4GG free health screening

The free health screening at the San Antonio Parish Social Hall on Dec. 6, 2015, drew almost 70 members of the Saipan community.

Organized and hosted by the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance Marianas chapter and the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations Marianas chapter, in collaboration with El Shaddai Saipan chapter, the health screening featured blood sugar and blood pressure checks, physicals, and distribution of free brochures on the prevention of diseases.

According to Dr. Celia Lamkin, chairperson of USP4GG and NaFFAA Marianas chapter for CNMI and Guam, those who availed of the health screening were not just Filipinos but also Chamorros, Carolinians, Chinese, and other nationalities.

Volunteer Valerie Jean Lacsina, who is a nurse coordinator for Marianas Medical Center, said, "The free health screening was very organized and successful. I encourage others to volunteer and help our community."

Another volunteer, Maribeth Gavan, who is a medical and billing encoder at Marianas Medical Center, said: "It is indeed a good feeling to volunteer and you know that you are helping other people, especially those who have no health insurance so their health parameters can be checked. I hope that this free health screening can be provided to the community on a regular basis."

The weight, height, and body mass index measurements were performed by Ronald Lamkin, a USP4GG Marianas chapter volunteer. Lamkin advised those with high BMI to modify their lifestyle and lose weight.

"I am glad that there are more members of the community who availed of the free health screening. This means that more people are getting health conscious and are more concerned about their health," he said.

Dr. Lamkin discussed lifestyle changes and healthy habits to those with abnormal levels of blood sugar and high blood pressure. They were also advised to consult their doctors and some were referred to medical clinics and the hospital.

Other volunteers from Marianas Medical Center were Mary Deala and Honey Ebuen. USPGG Marianas chapter members and volunteers who helped in the health screening were Jasminda Guiao, Johnny Gacayan, Chanda Olita, Jovy Brondo, and Edgar Gacayan. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Volunteers take the blood pressure, blood sugar level, height, weight, and BMI of the community members during the free health screening organized and hosted by USP4GG Marianas chapter and NaFFAA Marianas chapter on December 6, 2015, at San Antonio Parish Social Hall, San Antonio, Saipan.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dr. Celia Lamkin, chairperson of USP4GG and NaFFAA Marianas chapter (CNMI and Guam), seated second from left and Ronald Lamkin pose with the staff volunteers from Marianas Medical Center and CHC and USP4GG volunteers and members during the free health screening on Dec. 6, 2015 at San Antonio Parish Social Hall, San Antonio, Saipan. Seated from left: Fely Legaspi, Dr. Lamkin, Honey Ebuen, Mary Deala, and Jasminda Guiao. Standing from left: Ronald Lamkin, Sr. Fanny, Chanda Olita, Jovy Brondo, Maribeth Gavan, Valerie Jean Lacsina, and community member.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Valerie Jean Lacsina, nurse coordinator of Marianas Medical Center, volunteer to take the blood pressure during the free health screening.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ronald Lamkin determines the weight of a community member.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dr. Celia Lamkin discusses the results of the blood pressure and blood sugar with a community member.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

USP4GG volunteer Ronald Lamkin determines the height of a community member.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left: USP4GG members Jovy Brondo, also assistant coordinator of El Shaddai Saipan chapter, Chanda Olita, and Minda Guiao assist in the registration and in the distribution of snacks to the community members.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Fely Legaspi, a nurse at the Commonwealth Health Center, gets the blood pressure of USPGG member Johnny Gacayan. Others wait for their turn to be checked.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Snacks are prepared for community members during the free health screening.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ronald Lamkin explains the BMI results to a community member.

Business

Medical marijuana's big business lures ex-law enforcers

COLLINSVILLE, Ill. (AP)— With fewer than 4,000 approved patients, the nascent medical marijuana business in Illinois is off to a slow start. Yet it hasn't kept away a cadre of cannabis entrepreneurs who once relied on guns, badges, tough drug laws and lengthy prison sentences to fight the drug.

While neither state regulators nor the medical marijuana industry track the number of employees who were former law enforcement officials, The Associated Press has identified no fewer than 17 in Illinois, many of whom have outsized influence - from a trustee of the state's chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police to one-time undercover narcotics officers.

"Who better would you want to oversee your compliance than a cop?" said Scott Abbott, a retired Illinois State Police colonel paid to help a company adhere to the state's strict laws and regulations at two dispensaries.

The pull of such post-police jobs extends well beyond Illinois, such as Washington state and Colorado, where marijuana is legal for everyone over 21. But industry members in Illinois and beyond say the state is unusual in the degree to which former law enforcement officers are not just working security but taking hands-on roles with patients and leading businesses- even with the uncertain future of a four-year pilot program that expires in 2017 and has received lukewarm support from first-term Gov. Bruce Rauner.

Many have had a late-stage transformation, coming to see the drug less as a societal harm and more as good public policy - and good business. There's likely no better example than Terrance Gainer, a former Chicago homicide detective, Illinois State Police director, assistant police chief in Washington, D.C., U.S. Capitol police chief and U.S. Senate sergeant-at-arms.

After some initial reluctance, the 68-year-old said he was swayed in part by "the sea change in society and our attitudes" toward the drug and the possibility of big business. He advises Chicago-based Green Thumb Industries on its security needs, has worked with prospective marijuana-business owners in Florida and New York and testified in support of the industry before Maryland lawmakers.

"The business people involved in this are very serious about their investments," he said.

AP

In this Sept. 29, 2015, photo, Scott Abbott, a retired Illinois State Police colonel, speaks with Mark Lewis, left, and Jeff Greer at the new medical marijuana dispensary being built in Collinsville, Ill.

Other players in Illinois include retired Will County Circuit Judge Robert Livas, co-founder of a company licensed to open two Chicago-area dispensaries who was once named judge of the year by the Illinois State Crime Commission. Another is a former Chicago-area assistant state's attorney who handled gang crimes and now is vice president of a company that owns a dispensary. There's also an ex-Cook County prosecutor-turned- general counsel of PharmaCannis, the state's single largest pot provider with four dispensaries and two indoor growing operations.

There's also Arnette Heintze, a former U.S. Secret Service senior executive who helped protect two presidents. Terry Hillard, Heintze's partner at the Chicago consulting firm that advises medical marijuana growers and retailers on security, spent five years as Chicago's top cop.

Retired U.S. Marshal's inspector Jim Smith said his private security company is "trying to corner the market" in medical marijuana protection and armored transportation.

The law enforcement ties run especially deep in Collinsville, where Abbott is joined by a dispensary manager who also spent more than two decades with the highway patrol. Their commute is familiar—the soon-to-open HCI Alternatives dispensary is located next to the state police regional headquarters.

Former law enforcement officers proliferate in the states that pioneered the medical marijuana and legal marijuana businesses.

Denver Relief Consulting, which handles everything from business plan development to legislative advocacy, counts a retired Los Angeles County sergeant and Israeli National Security adviser among its top executives.

A Seattle-based medical marijuana investment firm lured Pat Moen, a 10-year Drug Enforcement Administration official, to join it in 2013.

"It's been incredibly rewarding," he said, estimating he's spoken with more than 100 current or former law enforcement officers about making a similar career transition. "This is a mainstream product sought my mainstream consumers."

Ben Percy, general manager of Trinity Compassionate Care Center in Peoria, switched careers after a 27-year stint with the Illinois State Police that included an assignment on a drug interdiction team that patrolled Interstate 55, which connects the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes.

"We took quite a bit of money, drugs and criminals off the road," he said.

Percy and others draw a sharp distinction between medical marijuana and recreational use but also describe dramatic conversions borne from seeing the benefits of marijuana for the sickest of patients, including children with epilepsy or cancer-stricken relatives.

"I've done a total about-face on my views," he said.

Abbott and others noted that they're still involved in the business they were before - law enforcement.

"I never got to pick and choose which laws I enforced ...This is the same thing," Abbott added. "It's legal right now. As long as they follow the law, I've got no problem with it."

Worker needs to initiate healing of relationship with boss

YOUR OFFICE COACH

By MARIE G. MCINTYRE
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Marie G. McIntyre is a workplace coach and the author of Secrets to Winning at Office Politics. *Send in questions and get free coaching tips at http://www.yourofficecoach.com, or follow her on Twitter @officecoach.*

Q: My boss took away one of my responsibilities because I failed to meet a deadline. Unfortunately, I have no excuse to explain why I didn't finish the project on time. I just didn't. But I will say that we have had a rather heavy workload recently.

After this happened, my manager said she was shifting some of my work to another person because I have no sense of accountability. I felt so belittled that I just said "whatever" and walked out of her office. Although I really need this job, I almost quit on the spot.

Looking back, I suppose I should have told my boss that the project was behind schedule. However, I feel she should be more understanding because I am very good at my job. I'm still thinking about leaving, even though I truly love my work. What's your opinion?

A: I think you're upset with the wrong person. Failing to warn your manager about the project delay was a serious error. As a result, she had to deliver this unwelcome surprise to her own boss, who may have been equally unhappy. Whenever bad news becomes inevitable, management should be told immediately.

On top of that, when you finally did share this information, you apparently had no reasonable excuse for being late. So even if your manager overreacted, the changes to your job clearly resulted from your own bad judgment. Getting angry with your boss may be easier than accepting this reality, but it certainly won't help your career.

If you try to retaliate by leaving a job you love, you will only be hurting yourself. A wiser course would be to rectify the relationship with your manager by apologizing for the missed deadline and assuring her that you will not repeat your mistakes. If you're as talented as you say you are, perhaps she will consider reversing her decision.

Q: I am currently unemployed, but I can't seem to get any interviews. I have begun to wonder if my employment history might be part of the problem. Although I am not a job-hopper, I do have a tendency to quit when I get bored or have trouble with office politics. What can I do about this?

A: I hate to break it to you, but quitting whenever work becomes tedious or relationships become difficult is the very definition of "job-hopper." If your resume consists of a series of short-term jobs, potential employers will logically assume that you won't stay around long, so talking with you would be a waste of time. Therefore, simply sending out resumes is unlikely to generate many interviews.

Instead, networking should become the centerpiece of your job search strategy, because a strong personal impression can overcome many concerns. When you do find a job, make every effort to stay long enough to show that you've broken your previous pattern. If you believe this may be difficult, perhaps a qualified career counselor can help you discover the source of your chronic discontent.

Aviation Week: Delta CEO is Person of Year

Aviation Week has named Delta CEO Richard Anderson its 2015 Person of the Year, citing his influence on the U.S. airline industry.

"The Delta Air Lines CEO has fundamentally changed the U.S. airline industry," the magazine wrote. "The merger of Delta and Northwest Airlines that he engineered kicked off massive consolidation in the U.S. airline industry—and an unusual period of high profits."

Every year the magazine names an individual who, for better or worse, had the greatest impact on aviation and aerospace throughout the year. The article notes that Anderson has his share of critics and has rankled some for taking strong positions against government subsidies of foreign airlines.

But his outsized influence on aviation is undeniable, the article continues, and compares him to industry titans like Herb Kelleher of Southwest Airlines, who fundamentally reshaped the airline business.

"His impact," the magazine states," is undeniable." ***(Delta)***

SIDEBAR

Travel + Leisure names Delta one of '10 Best Airlines of China'

Since 2009, Delta has been increasing nonstop flights from China to the U.S. to address the growing travel demand in the market. This year, the airline launched "Wo Ai Damei" initiatives, which means "I love Delta" in Mandarin, to continue building the most Chinese-friendly U.S. airline. The initiatives included launching a Chinese social networking service called "WeChat," accepting the online payment platform "Alipay" and introducing pre-order Chinese meals served in the Delta One cabin.

"The award is a result of our ongoing efforts to be the most Chinese-friendly U.S. airline," said Mandy Zhou, Delta's Director of China. "This year, we have made significant steps in the competitive Chinese market."

Delta currently operates daily nonstop flights from Seattle and Detroit to Beijing and Shanghai, and Los Angeles and Tokyo-Narita to Shanghai. Together with our partners, including China Eastern, Shanghai Airlines and China Southern, Delta offers extensive network connections to China and the United States.

Aside from airlines, hotels, cruises and destinations were also among the *Travel + Leisure* magazine award categories. The selection process started in May via online voting, and after experts reviewed the voting results, the list of award winners was narrowed down in October. Over 300 industrial representatives participated in the award ceremony held in Beijing on Nov. 26. ***(Delta)***

Nation

At least 11 die from Texas tornadoes, 13 in Midwest flooding

GARLAND, Texas (AP)—At least 11 people died and dozens were injured in strong tornadoes that swept through the Dallas area and caused substantial damage this weekend, while 13 people died in flooding in the Midwest.

It was the latest of a succession of powerful weather events across the country, from heavy snow in New Mexico, west Texas and the Oklahoma Panhandle to flooding in parts of the Plains and Midwest. Days of tumultuous weather have led to 43 deaths overall—those in Texas, plus five in Illinois, eight in Missouri and 19 in the Southeast.

The full extent of damage from Saturday's storms along a nearly 40-mile stretch near Dallas came into clear focus. Local officials estimated as many as 1,450 homes were damaged or destroyed in storms that the National Weather Service said produced nine tornadoes. Vehicles were mangled, power lines fell and trees were toppled. Heavy rain, wind and falling temperatures hampered cleanup efforts Sunday afternoon.

"This is a huge impact on our community, and we're all suffering," Garland Police Lt. Pedro Barineau said of the suburb about 20 miles northeast of Dallas, where eight people died, 15 were injured and about 600 structures, mostly single-family homes, were damaged.

The weather service said an EF-4 tornado, which is the second-most powerful with winds up to more than 200 mph, hit the community at about 6:45 p.m. Saturday. It was near the intersection of Interstate 30 and George Bush Turnpike, which is a major route in the region. At least three people who died were found in vehicles, said Barineau, who also noted that some cars appeared to be thrown from the interstate, though it wasn't known whether that was how the people found in the vehicles died.

AP
A Jeep Liberty sits destroyed on Shipman Street after Saturday's tornado in Rowlett, Texas, Sunday, Dec. 27, 2015.

Natalie Guzman, 33, took photos of her family's home in a Garland neighborhood. The garage wall had collapsed and the roof fell in. The only part of the house that appeared to be spared was the master bathroom, where her brother-in-law took shelter Saturday night. He was the only one at home and told her he had just enough time to get himself and his dogs into the bathroom.

"It was worse than I thought," Guzman said, comparing the scene to the photos he had sent Saturday.

The destruction in Garland was so overwhelming that Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins declared the city a disaster within mere minutes of seeing the toll firsthand.

"I don't declare local disasters lightly," Jenkins said. "But I looked at the scene for 10 minutes, spoke to the incident commander and then called the lawyers to bring the paperwork."

In the nearby town of Rowlett, City Manager Brian Funderburk said Sunday morning that 23 people were injured, but that there were no deaths and no reports of missing people. The weather service said damage indicated it was likely an EF-3 tornado, which has winds up to 165 mph.

Jenkins said in a statement Sunday night that as many as 600 homes were damaged in Rowlett.

Dale Vermurlen lived in a Rowlett neighborhood that sustained heavy damage. His house only had minor damage, but was next to that were flattened.

"I grabbed both dogs by the collars and held on to the toilet. I said, 'OK, this could be it, boys.'"

Relatives of 2 killed by Chicago police question shootings

CHICAGO (AP)—Grieving relatives and friends of two people shot and killed by Chicago police said Sunday the slayings raised concerns about why officers "shoot first and ask questions later," saying the city failed residents even as a federal civil rights investigation has begun scrutinizing police practices.

Quintonio LeGrier, 19, was killed early Saturday by police responding to a domestic disturbance at an apartment on the city's West Side, along with downstairs neighbor Bettie Jones, 55. Police said Jones was hit accidentally by the gunfire.

Both were black. The shootings came amid scrutiny of police after a series of deaths of African-Americans at the hands of officers across the country gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement.

LeGrier's mother, Janet Cooksey, during a vigil Sunday placed candles on the porch of the two-story home, where Jones lived in a ground-floor apartment and LeGrier's father in an upstairs unit. On either side of the door, Post-It notes indicated where two bullets hit siding on the house.

"I used to watch the news daily and I would grieve for other mothers, other family members, and now today I'm grieving myself," Cooksey said at a news conference outside the residence earlier Sunday. She wore a black shirt with Mayor Rahm Emanuel's image on it and the phrase "Rahm Failed Us."

Others who spoke said police should have used stun guns or other nonlethal methods if they felt they needed to subdue LeGrier, a college student home for holiday break.

"Why do (police) have to shoot first and ask questions later?" Jacqueline Walker, a friend of Jones, asked. "It's ridiculous."

Some who showed up to support the families of Jones and LeGrier questioned how such shootings could occur while federal investigators are focusing on the Chicago Police Department, including a look at whether there are patterns of racial disparity in the use of force.

"Something is seriously wrong," said the Rev. Marshall E. Hatch, who attended the vigil. "How in the middle of all this scrutiny, (can you) have a trigger-happy policeman?"

The Police Department said in a statement Saturday that officers who responded to a 911 call "were confronted by a combative subject resulting in the discharging of the officer's weapon."

"The 55-year-old female victim was accidentally struck and tragically killed," according to the statement, which extended "deepest condolences to the victim's family and friends."

Jones, a mother of five known for working with community groups committed to reducing violence, had hosted family on Christmas Day, friends and relatives said.

Damage from sinking land costing California billions

DOS PALOS, Calif. (AP)—A canal that delivers vital water supplies from Northern California to Southern California is sinking in places. So are stretches of a riverbed undergoing historic restoration. On farms, well casings pop up like mushrooms as the ground around them drops.

Four years of drought and heavy reliance on pumping of groundwater have made the land sink faster than ever up and down the Central Valley, requiring repairs to infrastructure that experts say are costing billions of dollars.

This slow-motion land subsidence—more than one foot a year in some places—is not expected to stop anytime soon, experts say, nor will the expensive repairs.

"It's shocking how a huge area is affected, but how little you can tell with your eye," said James Borchers, a hydro-geologist, who studies subsidence and says careful monitoring is necessary to detect and address sinking before it can do major damage to costly infrastructure such as bridges and pipelines.

Land subsidence is largely the result of pumping water from the ground. As aquifers are depleted, the ground sags.

The most severe examples today are in San Joaquin Valley, where the U.S. Geological Survey in 1975 said half of the land is prone to sinking. USGS researchers later called it one of the "single largest alterations of the land surface attributed to humankind."

A sparse mountain snowpack in California's driest four-year span on record has forced farmers in the Central Valley, the nation's most productive agricultural region, to rely on groundwater to irrigate their crops.

Drought has spawned a well-drilling boom with some tapping ancient aquifers 3,000 feet down.

In wet years, groundwater provides about 40 percent of water used in California, but in times of drought, groundwater can amount to 65 percent of the state's water supply.

Decades of over-pumping have destroyed thousands of well casings and buckled canal linings. To keep water flowing through low spots, irrigation districts raise the sides of sagging canals so they can increase the water level and maintain a gravitational flow.

As a result, at least one bridge now sits below the waterline. Chris White, general manager of the Central California Irrigation District in Los Banos, said replacing it is expected to cost $2.5 million. Rebuilding another canal recently cost $4.5 million.

Putting a grand total on damage from subsidence in California is tricky because irrigation districts don't often single out repairs required by subsidence from general upkeep, said Borchers, who estimates long-term costs as being "probably in the billions."

ACROSS THE NATION

Dangerous helicopter-bird strikes increase, few safety specs

WASHINGTON (AP)—The crew of a Dallas police helicopter was searching for a capsized boat last March, when there was a loud explosion and wind rushed through a huge hole in the windshield. The pilot, Sgt. Todd Limerick, put a hand over one eye, his face covered in blood and Plexiglass shards. He kept his other hand on the controls until the co-pilot, Cpl. Laurent Lespagnol, took over and landed the aircraft. "My first thought was that we had been shot. My second was the engine blew up," Lespagnol said in an interview. It wasn't until they had landed that they found the cause wedged between the cockpit seats—a 3-pound American coot, a duck-like bird. Reports of helicopter bird strikes are up dramatically in recent years, including incidents, like the one in Dallas, that damage the aircraft and create the potential for crashes, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. In 2013, there were 204 reported helicopter bird strikes, a 68 percent increase from 2009 when there were 121 reports and an increase of over 700 percent since the early 2000s, said Gary Roach, an FAA helicopter safety engineer.

Molotov cocktail damages California mosque; intent unknown

TRACY, Calif. (AP)—San Joaquin County sheriff's officials are investigating whether a Molotov cocktail attack at a mosque in Tracy was a hate crime. Sheriff's officials say the device went off at the Tracy Islamic Center Friday night or early Saturday. It caused about $1,000 of damage. Lt. Mike Van Grouw tells the Sacramento Bee deputies were unable to locate surveillance video and have not come up with a description of the suspect. He said without any suspects, the intent of the attack is unknown.

Police: 7-year-old boy killed in drive-by shooting

RICHMOND HEIGHTS, Fla. (AP)—Police say a 7-year-old boy was killed in a drive-by shooting Sunday while visiting family in southwest Miami-Dade for the holidays. According to The Miami Herald Miami-Dade Police officer Juan Perez said the shooting, in Richmond Heights, about 24 miles southwest of Miami, involved a high-powered rifle. Police said four men pulled up in a vehicle and shot at the house around 3:30 p.m. Police were searching for a white, four-door Dodge Ram with tinted window believed to be involved. Relatives of the victim said his name is Amir and that he was visiting their house. They said he was coming out of the house when the shooting started. Miami-Dade Commissioner Dennis Moss said, "It's our worst nightmare realized." Police continued to investigate Sunday night.

Asia

South Korea, Japan to discuss wartime Korean sex slaves

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—The foreign ministers of South Korea and Japan will Monday to try to resolve the decades-long thorny issue of Korean women forced into Japanese military-run brothels during World War II, Seoul officials said.

The issue of former Korean sex slaves, euphemistically known as "comfort women," is the biggest source of friction in ties between Seoul and Tokyo, which suffered further setbacks after the late 2012 inauguration of hawkish Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Last month, the leaders of the countries resumed formal talks after a 3 Ω-year hiatus and agreed to try to resolve the sex slave issue. There have since been positive developments, such as a Seoul court's acquittal of a Japanese reporter charged with defaming South Korea's president.

It wasn't clear if Monday's meeting between South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida would produce any breakthroughs. Japan has apologized many times before over the women, but many South Koreans see the statements and past efforts at private compensation as insufficient.

The women are the legacy of Japan's brutal colonial occupation of the Korean Peninsula from 1910-1945. Many South Koreans still harbor bitter resentment over that period, but South Korean officials have also faced calls to improve ties with Japan.

AP

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se, right, and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida pose for a photo at the start of their meeting at Foreign Ministry in Seoul Monday, Dec. 28, 2015.

Despite their harsh history, South Korea and Japan are closely linked commercially and are key security allies of the United States in the region. Strained ties between Seoul and Tokyo is a headache for Washington, which wants to strengthen its alliance with the two countries to better cope with a rising China and North Korean military threats.

South Korea and Japan together host about 80,000 U.S. troops and are members of now-stalled regional talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear ambitions in return for aid.

ASIAN BRIEFS

14 killed in Muslim rebel attacks in southern PH

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Christmas attacks by Muslim rebels in Christian villages in the southern Philippines left at least 14 people dead and may have been partly influenced by the notoriety of the Islamic State group, officials said Saturday. The dead included nine Christian villagers separately gunned down by Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter insurgents and at least five rebels killed by government forces in clashes in three provinces on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, said regional military spokeswoman Capt. Joan Petinglay. About 200 rebels took part in at least eight attacks on Thursday and Friday, Petinglay said by phone. She said the military learned about the impending attacks and secured towns and villages and warned villagers not to venture out, preventing a larger number of casualties. "We learned that the BIFF had plans to attack civilians and our detachments so we went on heightened alert even before Christmas," Petinglay said. "That prevented the rebels from attacking villages and inflicting more casualties." Despite warnings from the military, five farmers went to their farms Thursday to spray insecticide on their crops in Maguindanao province and were captured and gunned down by the rebels, she said.

China's legislature OKs controversial anti-terrorism law

BEIJING (AP)—China's rubber-stamp national legislature on Sunday approved the country's first anti-terrorism law, amid concerns that its requirements that tech companies share information with the government could hurt business interests and further infringe upon human rights. The National People's Congress said its standing committee adopted the law with a unanimous vote. The law goes into effect Jan. 1. Rights advocates and foreign governments, including Washington, have expressed concerns about the law's likely impact on tech businesses and freedom of speech. They say it is troublesome that telecommunications companies and Internet service providers are required to share encryption keys and back-door access with the police and state security agents seeking to prevent terrorist activities or investigating terror acts.

Official in China city hit by deadly landslide kills himself

BEIJING (AP)—Police in southern China say a local government official has killed himself, a week after a landslide from a pileup of construction waste in his city left scores missing and presumed dead. A statement from the Shenzhen police said the head of the Urban Management Bureau in the city's Guangming New District jumped to his death from a building Sunday. The official was identified only by his surname, Xu. No further details were given. In the Dec. 20 disaster, a mountain of construction waste collapsed amid heavy rains onto an industrial park in Guangming New District, killing one person and leaving 75 missing and presumed dead. In a rare move, Shenzhen's top officials, including the city's Communist Party chief and its mayor, bowed deeply at a news conference to apologize.

Taiwan presidential front-runner: Can't 'be bound' to China

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—The front-runner in Taiwan's presidential race said Sunday that she would seek stable relations with mainland China, but did not rule out revisiting the island's official stance on independence, leaving open questions about how China would respond to her probable victory in next month's elections.

Tsai Ing-wen, the opposition leader who has firmly held onto a sizeable lead in polls, used her platform during the first debate to warn against the political rapprochement and deepening economic ties with the mainland brought by the ruling Nationalist Party, or KMT, since the 2008 elections.

"We cannot simply be bound to China," Tsai said. "That's what worries us most about the past eight years—the sense that that's the only choice we have. That's not good for our economy or our security."

Against the backdrop of a sputtering economy and rising anti-mainland sentiment, the Jan. 16 elections have been framed by both the KMT and the opposition Democratic Progressive Party as a referendum on President Ma Ying-jeou's China policy.

Ma backed—with varying degrees of success—several trade pacts with the mainland during his two terms and held a historic summit in November with Chinese President Xi Jinping. It was the first such meeting since the Chinese Communist Party defeated the KMT in China's civil war and established the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The upcoming election is being closely watched by Washington and Beijing, which considers Taiwan a breakaway province and has threatened to take the island by force if it declares independence. Xi has delivered hard-line messages to Taiwanese leaders in private meetings, while China's military conducted exercises near Taiwan earlier this year in a show of force.

On Sunday, Tsai and her main opponent, KMT chairman Eric Chu, offered contrasting visions of how to revitalize Taiwan, which is becoming increasingly crowded out by the world's No. 2 economy on the world stage. Still, both distanced themselves from the deeply unpopular Ma.

Chu, the mayor of New Taipei City adjacent to the island's capital, apologized for the incumbent party's performance, but attacked Tsai as a destabilizing force whose victory would only undercut an economy that unexpectedly shrank in the third quarter. He described forging ties with China as a matter of economic reality.

"When I talk to our fruit farmers, our fishermen, our small businesses, they say the No. 1 thing they fear is Tsai Ing-wen," Chu said, while repeatedly criticizing Tsai's stance on the independence issue as vague.

Afghan official: IS, militia brutally kill other's fighters

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghanistan's Islamic State affiliate and a rival militia controlled by a prominent lawmaker have killed eight captured fighters from both sides in a brutal killing spree in the eastern border province of Nangarhar, an Afghan official said on Sunday.

According to Ghalib Mujahid, the governor of the Achin district in Nangarhar, each group beheaded at least four fighters from the rival group who were captured during battles on Saturday.

The militia is loyal to Zahir Qadir, Afghanistan's deputy speaker of parliament. Mujahid said Qadir's militiamen killed the captive IS gunmen and put their heads on display along a main road through the district.

The killings reflect rampant lawlessness in this remote part of Afghanistan. It is not unusual for powerful Afghan figures and politicians to control personal militias, though the central government and international organizations such as the United Nations have expressed concern about a proliferation of armed groups that are not part of the government's security force.

Achin is one of four districts that Afghan officials say has come under IS control in recent months. Government forces have returned to the region to try to dislodge the IS extremists, who also fought fierce battles with the rival Taliban during the summer months.

IS has also established a presence in other volatile regions of Afghanistan, but Nangarhar appears to be their main powerbase.

Mujahid condemned the brutal killing of the captives on both sides. "It is not acceptable for either side to act like this."

Meanwhile, in southern Helmand province—where the Taliban are fighting government forces for control of a number of districts—a roadside bomb killed a local police commander and two of his bodyguards on Sunday, said provincial police spokesman Shah Mahmood Ashna.

He said that other two police officers were wounded in the explosion in the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.

World

IS puts up heavy fight to slow Iraqi troop advance on Ramadi

BAGHDAD (AP)—Islamic State fighters are putting up a tough fight in the militant-held city of Ramadi, slowing down the advance of Iraqi forces, a senior Iraqi commander said Sunday.

Iraq launched the long-awaited operation to retake the Anbar provincial capital, which was captured by IS militants in May, but after an initial push across the Euphrates River, their progress stalled.

Gen. Ismail al-Mahlawi, head of the Anbar military operations, told The Associated Press that the advance was hampered by suicide bombers, snipers and booby traps.

Iraqi troops will "need days" to get to the city's central government complex, said al-Mahlawi, adding that the troops were about one kilometer (half mile) from the complex on Sunday.

Al-Mahlawi said he could neither confirm nor deny media reports that IS fighters had pulled out of the government complex by nightfall Sunday. But he cited residents in the area as telling his troops that the IS militants had withdrawn from the neighborhood of Albu Alwan, adjacent to the complex.

AP

Iraqi Security forces enter the heavy damaged downtown Ramadi, 70 miles (115 kilometers) west of Baghdad, Iraq, Sunday, Dec. 27, 2015.

Another officer said the Iraqi army has yet to gain full control of a single Ramadi neighborhood. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters.

On Tuesday, Iraqi security forces reported progress in recapturing some areas in the western city of Ramadi, 130 kilometers (80 miles) west of Baghdad, from IS militants.

The extremists control large swaths of land in western and northern Iraq and in neighboring Syria. The IS group has declared a self-styled caliphate on the territory under its control.

After overrunning Ramadi, IS destroyed all the bridges around the city. It also demolished the Anbar operations command center and fanned out into the city's residential areas to set up less conspicuous centers of command.

A statement late Sunday from the Iraqi joint command said the operation in Anbar is going according to plans and that Iraqi forces continue to encircle the government complex in Ramadi. It made no mention of any pullout of IS militants from the area.

UK military helps combat flooding as it spreads to cities

LONDON (AP)—British Prime Minister David Cameron sent hundreds more troops into northern England on Sunday to help exhausted residents and emergency workers fight back rising river waters that have inundated towns and cities after weeks of heavy rain.

Cameron said the flooding is "unprecedented" and vowed to do everything possible to protect people and their property as the damage spread to the major cities York, Leeds and Manchester. He said protective systems and contingency plans will be reviewed because the frequency of such extreme weather events seems to be on the rise.

Weeks of persistent rainfall has saturated the ground and swollen the rivers to record levels, leaving entire swathes of northern England, and smaller parts of Wales and Scotland, vulnerable. Several hundred flood warnings remain in effect.

There have been no fatalities or serious injuries reported, but hundreds of people have been evacuated from houses and apartments in York, 200 miles (320 kilometers) north of London, where 3,500 properties are judged to be at risk. Emergency crews worked extra shifts to try to restore power to roughly 7,500 blacked out homes in the greater Manchester and Lancashire areas.

Environment Secretary Liz Truss said flood protection systems put in place in recent years were unable to cope with the record-high river levels.

"In Lancashire every single river was at a record-high," she said. "In Yorkshire we have seen some rivers a meter (yard) higher than they have ever been before. Clearly, in the light of that, we will be reviewing our flood defenses."

Several hundred peole had been evacuated the day before in the West Yorkshire and Lancashire regions and officials said thousands had lost power. The number of people affected continues to grow as flooding spreads and impacts cities as well as villages and towns.

A picturesque 200-year-old pub, The Waterside, in the greater Manchester area, collapsed and part of the structure was swept away by the River Irwell. Rising river levels also threatened downtown Manchester and police dealt with a ruptured gas main and small fire believed to have been caused by the flooding.

The Environment Agency urged residents to remain vigilant because more "severe" flooding is expected overnight and Monday.

The agency used its Twitter feed to beg people to be cautious, tweeting that driving or walking in flowing flood waters could be life-threatening.

Rescue crews have been using boats to help remove people from their homes and in some cases from their nearly submerged vehicles.

Boko Haram attacks northeast Nigerian city, many killed

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (AP)—Boko Haram Islamic extremists struck the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri for the first time in months Monday with rocket-propelled grenades and multiple suicide bombers, witnesses said. At least 15 people were killed but the toll was feared many times higher.

Nigerian troops "intercepted and destroyed" 10 suicide bombers, according to PR Nigeria, an agency that disseminates government news.

Maiduguri, the city under attack, is the birthplace of Boko Haram, which emerged as a much more radical entity after Nigerian security forces attacked their compound there, killing 700 people in 2009.

Militants firing indiscriminately from the back of three trucks attacked the outlying village of Dawari, soldiers engaged them, and as people were fleeing, a woman ran into a suburb yelling "Boko Haram, Boko Haram." When people gathered, she detonated herself, according to village head Bulama Isa.

As the chaos reigned and a rocket-propelled grenade exploded, setting alight grass-thatched huts, a second woman blew herself up, according to Isa. The village chief, 10 of his children and others were killed in Duwari, an outlying suburb of Maiduguri, according to residents Ahmed Bala and Umar Ibrahim.

"The troops laid ambush on the terrorists' suspected routes. ...The suicide bombers were intercepted in three different locations approaching the city," PR Nigeria said, quoting the military.

The area is close to Giwa Barracks, a major military base attacked several times in the past by the extremists. In January 2014, Boko Haram attacked the base and freed hundreds of detainees. Nigeria's military is accused of killing thousands of detainees there, by human rights groups.

The attack comes as Nigeria's government says it has contained the Islamic uprising that has killed 20,000 people in six years and driven 2.3 million people from their homes.

The government claim is impossible to ascertain in an area where access is dangerous and restricted by the military.

But the report of the attack, a few dozen insurgents in three trucks, is a far cry from previous attacks by hundreds of militants including tanks stolen from the military.

It could bear out the government's report that most terrorist hideouts have been destroyed and they are reduced to seeking "soft targets" through suicide bombings.

Syrian army kills 17 Islamic militants in country's south

BEIRUT (AP)—Syrian government forces booby trapped a cluster of farm buildings in the southern Daraa province and detonated the explosives as several Islamic rebel factions gathered at the venue, killing 17 militants, opposition activists said Sunday.

The explosion, which took place late Saturday, was the latest blow to the rebels shortly after the assassination the previous day of a powerful rebel leader on the outskirts of Damascus. The developments could boost the position of the Damascus government ahead of Syria peace talks in Geneva next month.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported the explosion in the village of Kfar Shams. Ahmad al-Masalmeh, a Daraa-based opposition activist, said explosives were planted at the farm and were detonated when the militants had gathered there.

"Once the fighters entered the farm, the explosives were detonated, killing 17," al-Masalmeh said.

Syria's state news agency reported that several fighters of the Islamic Muthana Movement were killed and two of their "dens were demolished at Kfar Shams."

In Turkey, gunmen fatally shot Syrian activist Naji al-Jarf as he walked in a street in the southern city of Gaziantep, according to the Observatory and the Syrian opposition's Shaam Network news group. Al-Jarf was the editor-in-chief of pro-opposition Hinta Magazine, according to Shaam Network.

The Observatory's chief, Rami Abdurrahman, said al-Jarf was killed with a pistol outfitted with a silencer, adding that the motive for the killing was unknown.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the slaying. In October, the Islamic State group said it was behind the killing of two opposition activists in the southern Turkish city of Sanliurfa.

The identities of the Islamic fighters killed in the farm explosion were not immediately known and it was not clear if they all belonged to the Muthana Movement or other factions. The movement itself is a relatively minor Daraa-based group of Islamic insurgents.

The area where the attack occurred is in a triangle that links Damascus suburbs with the southern regions of Daraa and Quneitra. The village itself is known to house many chicken farms, which supply large parts of Syria with eggs and the attack apparently took place in one of the chicken farms.

Overdrive

Watch out car dealers, there's a new kid in town

SAN DIEGO (The San Diego Union-Tribune)—A fleet of technology startups are aiming to upend the old way of buying and selling used cars, remodeling the often torturous processes into pleasant ones that require little or no work at all.

One such company, Shift, is pulling into the San Diego region with a web and mobile used car marketplace designed by former Googlers. The San Francisco company, backed by more than $73 million in capital, encourages car sellers to sit at home and click or tap their way to a sale price that is 30 percent greater, on average, than what is offered by traditional dealers.

The year-and-a-half-old startup hopes to capture a sizable portion of the $105 billion used car dealer market, as estimated by industry researcher IBIS World, with an approach that should feel more glamorous than gut-wrenching.

"We offer a hassle-free, white-glove experience if you want to sell your car," said Minnie Ingersoll, co-founder and chief operations officer at Shift. "You get an easier experience than Craigslist, and a better price than a dealership."

Shift "car enthusiast" Becca Hertz uses a proprietary app on her iPad to help appraise a seller's car on Dec. 10, 2015 in San Diego. Several of the vehicle's characteristics are entered into the app before an offer is made.

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE/TNS

Ingersoll, who helped to create Google Fiber during her 11 years at the Mountain View Internet titan, said the idea behind Shift first clicked after she tried to unsuccessfully sell a car on Craigslist. She ended up at a dealership, opting to accept an unattractive offer over dealing with strangers.

With Shift, interested sellers need only visit the company's website and enter some basic information about their vehicle to receive a quote. The company then dispatches an employee, called a "car enthusiast," to the seller's location to perform a 15-minute evaluation of the car and make a firm offer. The price is calculated by dissecting car sales data in local markets.

"We use an algorithm, and it's based on how fast we think we can sell your car, or demand from markets," Ingersoll said.

Should the seller accept the deal, Shift takes the car into its possession, puts it through a rigorous inspection and detailing process, snaps professional photos and uses its founders' Google-prowess to intelligently list the vehicle across a variety of sites. And, if Shift sells the car for more than the original offer, it will split the extra proceeds, 50-50, with the customer. Plus, no matter what, the seller will always receive at least the amount originally offered.

The selling process, Ingersoll said, generally takes less than 30 days, and, if Shift can't find a buyer, the seller is paid after 60 days.

Shift operates a two-sided marketplace, meaning the company offers a similar, hands-off experience for would-be buyers who also want to avoid the dealership experience. Shift's buying component, however, won't arrive in San Diego until the company establishes a warehouse locally, which it plans to do early next year.

Currently, Shift operates warehouses in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and uses the locations to house and prep its for-sale inventory. The idea is to keep cars in close proximity to local buyers, as part of Shift's twist is to deliver a car, on demand, to a prospective buyer's home or office, leaving one of the core tenets of old-fashioned car-buying intact: the test drive.

The test drive, however, turns out to be divisive detail in the debate as to whether online used car players can effectively sell direct to consumers.

"Our experience at (Kelley Blue Book) is that people still want to see the car they want to buy," said Jack Nerad, an executive market analyst with Kelley Blue Book.

Yet startup Beepi, a licensed online dealer of used cars, has been operating its alternative auto business, a competitor to Shift, in San Diego since March and insists the test drive is a thing of the past.

"We think of car buying and car selling in a completely different way," said Alejandro Resnik, CEO of Beepi. "We eliminated the test drive from the process. It's better for sellers; better for buyers."

For sellers, he said, the advantage is being able to keep—and continue to drive—your car while Beepi works to sell it online. Whereas with Shift, you need to hand your vehicle over to the company during the sale process.

Those who buy with Beepi may not get to kick the tires, but they do get the reassurance of being able to return the vehicle for any reason in 10 days. That plus a 240-point inspection should allay any reservations about buying cars sight unseen, Resnik believes. And shoppers do benefit by not having to limit browsing to local-only inventory. With Beepi, a buyer can choose a car from any of the startup's markets, which span nine states and 15 metropolitan areas.

"If you like it, you buy it," Resnik said. "Seven days later, a beautiful car will show up with a bow on top."

Test drive or not, Shift, Beepi and other tech novices looking to change the age-old car-selling game are fighting against a tried-and-true formula that may not be as ripe for disruption as the companies' think.

"There is a perception, real or not, and I think not, that the current system is broken," Nerad said. "It's great that people are always trying to find a better mouse trap, but there are some things that, I think, are going to be hard to change."

Consumers may not always love the car-buying process in the moment, he said, but most are pretty satisfied once it's completed.

"When you have convenience plus (a better) price, it's not a hugely difficult thing to change consumer behavior," said Emily Melton, a partner at venture firm DFJ and a Shift board member.

Joint First Year Death Anniversary

†Lucinda Roberto-Sablan
January 9, 2015

†Vicente Manglona Sablan
January 25, 2015

†Angelina Sablan-Reyes
February 22, 2015

In joyful celebration of their new lives, we the family humbly invite all our relatives and friends join us in prayer as we celebrate the first death anniversary of our dearly beloved.

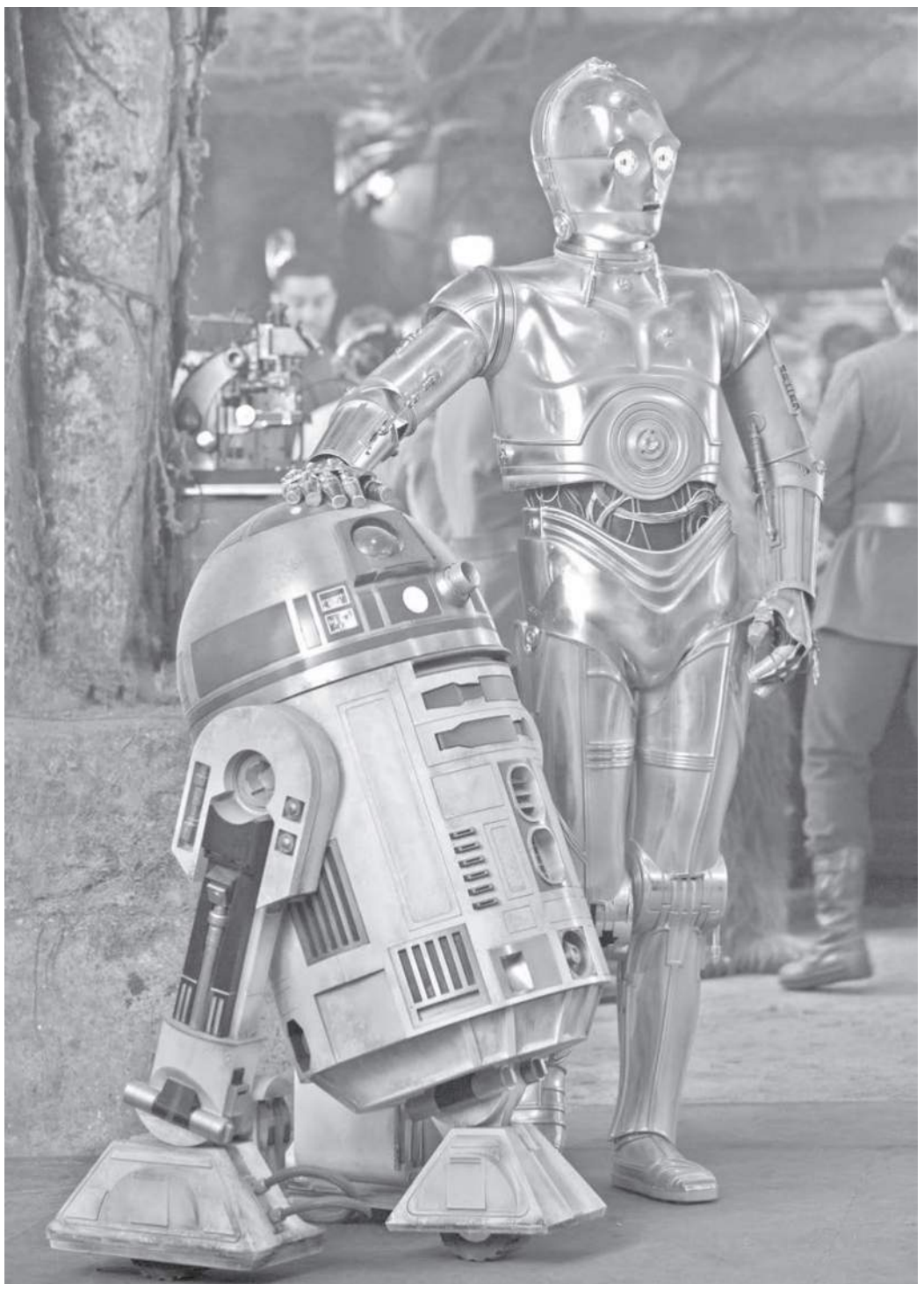
Daily Mass of Intention will be offered at the Mt. Carmel Cathedral, beginning January 1, 2016 at 9:00am and January 2 to 9, 2016 at 6:00am.

On the final day, Saturday, January 9th, breakfast will be served at the Joeten-Daidai Social Hall after the mass.

Dangkulo na Si Yu'os Ma'ase, Salamat Po, and Thank You

The Family

Life & Style



'Force Awakens' becomes fastest movie to $1 billion

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"Star Wars: The Force Awakens" has reached $1 billion at the box office, achieving the milestone with record-setting hyper speed.

The Walt Disney Co. said "The Force Awakens" crossed the billion-dollar mark Sunday, accomplishing the feat in just 12 days. The previous movie to reach $1 billion the fastest was Universal's "Jurassic World," which did it in 13 days in June. "Jurassic World" also had the benefit of record grosses in China. "The Force Awakens" doesn't open in the world's second-largest movie market until Jan. 9.

J.J. Abrams' installment of "Star Wars" also posted the biggest Christmas Day box office in history with $49.3 million and the best second-weekend earnings with $153.5 million.

"The Force Awakens" has been setting records since its debut Dec. 17. It brought in a galactic $238 million in North America over its opening weekend, besting previous record-setter "Jurassic World," and set international opening-weekend records in Australia, New Zealand and throughout Europe. It scored the biggest worldwide debut with $529 million. It also topped $100 million in IMAX screenings in 10 days, another global record.

"You almost have to rewrite all the record books for this movie," box office analyst Paul Dergarabedian of Rentrak said. "It's absolutely mind-blowing that 'Star Wars' could get to a billion dollars in 12 days and it hasn't even opened in China, the second biggest movie market in the world."

The power of "Star Wars" meant the rest of the week's releases were competing for second place. That prize went to the Paramount comedy "Daddy's Home," which opened with $38.8 million, according to studio estimates Sunday. David O. Russell's new drama starring Jennifer Lawrence, "Joy," debuted in third place with $17.5 million.

A flurry of new films also opened in the top 10 this weekend. "Concussion," the Will Smith-NFL drama, took in $11 million, good for sixth place, followed by the financial-crisis saga "The Big Short," which collected $10.5 million. The remake of "Point Break" opened with $10.2 million. And Quentin Tarantino's latest film, "The Hateful Eight," debuted in 10th place with $4.5 million.

A juggernaut like "Star Wars" empowers the entire industry, Dergarabedian said.

"It's great for the audiences, great for studios and theater owners in particular who can point to this and say the movie theater industry is as viable and relevant as it's ever been," he said.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Rentrak. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. **"Star Wars: The Force Awakens,"** $153.5 million ($133.3 international).
2. **"Daddy's Home,"** $38.8 million ($4.4 million).
3. **"Joy,"** $17.5 million ($2 million international).
4. **"Sisters,"** $13.9 million ($300,000 international).
5. **"Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip,"** $12.7 million ($8.1 million international).
6. **"Concussion,"** $11 million.
7. **"The Big Short,"** $10.5 million ($1.4 million international).
8. **"Point Break,"** $10.2 million ($2 million).
9. **"The Hunger Games: Mockingjay-Part 2,"** $5.3 million ($6.4 million).
10. **"The Hateful Eight,"** $4.5 million.

10 films to look forward to in 2016

By RAFER GUZMAN
NEWSDAY

The major movie studios haven't been just waiting around to see whether "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" would be a blockbuster. They've known that since Disney announced the film in 2012. Now that it's out, and possibly destined to become the highest-grossing film ever, the studios are aggressively rolling out some strong titles in 2016.

As always, that means more superhero franchises, including not one, not two, but three "X-Men" films, (beginning with the Ryan Reynolds vehicle "Deadpool" on Feb. 12). There's also a fairly high number of long-awaited comedies, from the new "Ghostbusters" to Ben Stiller's "Zoolander 2." And for moviegoers who follow directors as well as stars, new films from Richard Linklater and the Coen Brothers are on the slate.

Fair warning: You may find that next year will end much like this one, with another "Star Wars" movie, "Rogue One," scheduled for Dec. 16. In the meantime, here are 10 films to look forward to in 2016.

HAIL, CAESAR! (Feb. 5): Josh Brolin plays Eddie Mannix, a Hollywood "fixer" named after a real MGM executive. If that's not meta enough, the film's title is that of a film (starring a famous actor played by George Clooney) within this film, which centers on a kidnapping plot. Also starring Ralph Fiennes, Jonah Hill and Tilda Swinton.

ZOOLANDER 2 (Feb. 12): Ben Stiller's 2001 comedy "Zoolander," about a male model and his brainless friends, has become such an esteemed modern classic that the idea of a sequel—even with original stars Owen Wilson and Will Ferrell—sounds worrisome. The trailer, however, promises good things, despite a minor controversy over Benedict Cumberbatch as a gender-ambiguous model named All.

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE (March 25): The initial outcry over Ben Affleck's casting as Batman seems to have subsided, though that could change once superfans finally see this hotly anticipated film (directed by Zack Snyder, of "Man of Steel"). At any rate, the really interesting thing about it is the introduction of Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman, who'll get her own movie in 2017. Henry Cavill returns as Superman.

EVERYBODY WANTS SOME (April 15): Richard Linklater's new movie focuses on a group of college baseball players, and features a largely unknown cast. Little is known about the plot—Linklater movies don't always have one, anyway—but what makes this movie special is that it's being called a "spiritual sequel" to his beloved 1993 film "Dazed and Confused."

SNOWDEN (May 13): If someone's going to direct a biopic of the controversial whistle-blower Edward Snowden, who better than Oliver Stone? Some might say: Who worse? And that's what will make this movie interesting. Although it has a troubled history—it was originally scheduled for a Christmas 2015 release—the casting of Joseph Gordon-Levitt in the lead sounds promising.

MONEY MONSTER (May 13): Jodie Foster directs George Clooney—you're already sold, right?—in a thriller about a popular television stock-tipster who gives bad advice to the wrong guy. This sounds like a B-movie plot with a classy cast (including Julia Roberts and Dominic West), a formula that has certainly worked before.

WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT/TNS
Ben Affleck and Henry Cavill in "Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice."

FINDING DORY (June 17): Though few specifics are known about the plot, a sequel to "Finding Nemo" is bound to pull in audiences, and Pixar is still the gold standard for animated films (yes, even despite "The Good Dinosaur"). Ellen DeGeneres returns to play the voice of Dory, the forgetful blue tang, who goes off in search of her own family.

GHOSTBUSTERS (July 15): The 1984 sci-fi comedy gets a makeover with Kristen Wiig, Melissa McCarthy, Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones donning the famous jumpsuits. This is reportedly a new story, not merely an all-female reboot, written by Katie Dippold ("The Heat") and director Paul Feig ("Spy"). Chris Hemsworth plays the troupe's receptionist.

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN (Oct. 7): Emily Blunt plays a woman traumatized by a recent divorce who begins eavesdropping on a seemingly perfect couple. This thriller from Tate Taylor ("The Help") is based on Paula Hawkins' best-selling novel and stars Rebecca Ferguson ("Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation"), Edgar Ramirez ("Joy") and Allison Janney.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM (Nov. 18): Many major studios have been trying to replace the "Harry Potter" franchise, but the lucky folks at Warner Bros. simply went back to their source: J.K. Rowling, making her screenwriting debut with a film about a Hogwarts textbook. Eddie Redmayne plays its author, Newt Scamander, heading a cast that includes Katherine Waterston, Ezra Miller and Colin Farrell. Directed by four-time "Potter" veteran David Yates.

Oscar again has eyes on Eddie

By ANDREA MANDELL
USA TODAY

Eddie Redmayne in "The Danish Girl." FOCUS FEATURES/TNS

LOS ANGELES—One might expect Eddie Redmayne to brag. Just a little.

After all, he won the best actor Oscar this year, and already has racked up Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild and Critics' Choice nominations for his role as a transgender woman in the 1920s love story The Danish Girl, in theaters nationwide Christmas Day. Pundits are wondering if he could be the first actor since Tom Hanks to win back-to-back Academy Awards. (Hanks won for 1993's Philadelphia and 1994's Forrest Gump.)

Redmayne also happens to be the new face of the Harry Potter franchise, having taken on the role of Newt Scamander in Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them (now filming in London).

Still, he's just so normal.

"Oh, good. Good!" says Redmayne, 33, laughing. "I thought you were about to say, 'You've changed.'"

The actor is on a 24-hour release from shooting Fantastic Beasts, having flown in on a private plane from the set for a 10-hour trip to The Danish Girl's U.S. premiere. "There was a bed on the plane," he says, a bit agog, noting that he and his wife Hannah "were sort of high fiveing each other."

But after a walk down the red carpet, he'll whisk back to London and hit the set an hour later. "He's incredible like that," says his Danish Girl director Tom Hooper, who last directed him in Les Miserables. "His head is not being turned by his success, and that's rare."

That work ethic was evident on The Danish Girl. In February, Redmayne stood on the Dolby Theatre stage, accepting his first Oscar for portraying Stephen Hawking in The Theory of Everything. He recalls "the euphoria, 5 o'clock in the morning, the morning after the Oscars, roof of the Sunset Towers with seven friends, sun coming up, Sunset Boulevard with a flipping Oscar that almost didn't look real it was so shiny, going, 'Ahhhh!'"

A day later he was strapped to a turn-of-the-century medical table, as Lili Elbe.

"He came straight from the airport back on set," says Hooper. "We're chatting about what it's like to win an Oscar, five minutes goes past, I look at my watch, and then he's like, 'We should go back to work.'"

In The Danish Girl, Redmayne plays Einar Wegener, a celebrated landscape artist who hides a longing to live as a woman. Alicia Vikander, who plays his wife, Gerda, remembers the power of seeing Redmayne as Lili the first time.

"I was looking for Eddie, and then I see this gorgeous red-headed woman just turning around and I was just quite amazed," she says. "This is something that everyone teased me about. Tom was like, 'Yes! She was on set for about five minutes without realizing that was Eddie!'"

Redmayne shows great care when speaking of Lili, a longtime icon of the transgender community. The film "has been the most extraordinary education for me," he says. He hopes audiences turn out to see what a unique love story The Danish Girl is. "We strive to have order amongst fluidity (when) actually love is the one thing that can't be defined in the way that perhaps gender can't either," he says.

As for Oscar, experts say the icy wilderness drama The Revenant could give Redmayne a run for his money. "Eddie is looking like a sure thing for a second consecutive Oscar nomination," says Fandango.com Oscar expert Dave Karger. "But just as Michael Keaton (Birdman) was tough competition last time, he's got to contend with Leonardo DiCaprio, who has never won before and has to be considered the front-runner at this point."

Let magic take care of the rest. Tomorrow, it's back to Fantastic Beasts. "Whoosh!" says Redmayne, shooting off an imaginary wand as he scoots down a hotel hallway.

And then?

"That's a question you'll have to ask my wife," he grins. "I'm like, 'I'm going to take months off!' She's like, 'You always say that.' And then you get sort of itchy feet."

Q&A: Ferrell, Wahlberg face off in 'Daddy's Home'

By Patrick Ryan
USA TODAY

NEW YORK—Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg are together again.

After playing ill-suited detectives in 2010's The Other Guys, the funny guys are squaring off in Daddy's Home (in theaters Christmas Day). Ferrell plays strait-laced stepdad Brad (Ferrell), who feels territorial when his kids' real father, Dusty (Wahlberg), swoops in to parent and try to win back ex-wife Sarah (Linda Cardellini). As Ferrell puts it, the movie is "an original take on the family comedy and comments on what's becoming increasingly more of the norm: the idea of a blended family, with stepparents being involved with the actual biological parents and co-parenting."

They're roles that Ferrell, 48, and Wahlberg, 44, know well: Each has kids of his own (Ferrell has three sons; Wahlberg has two daughters and two sons).

The actors catch up with USA TODAY to share their own parenting tips, how they survive Christmas and what movie they'd like to make together next:

Q: How would you compare your own parenting styles with those of Brad and Dusty?

Wahlberg: I'm more like Brad, really.

Ferrell: I would say my parenting style is distant, at best. Keep the kids away, bring them out for birthdays and holidays. Otherwise, I don't got time.

Q: What would your kids say is the most embarrassing thing you do as a parent?

Wahlberg: Tell them how much I love them in front of their friends. Getting emotional? That doesn't go over well.

Ferrell: Yeah, doing all the things you think they would love really embarrasses them. They'll appreciate it later.

Q: How about ways that you've earned "cool" points with your kids?

Wahlberg: Taylor Swift and One Direction (concerts) for my daughters. Football games. Basketball games. Professional wrestlers showing up at the house.

Ferrell: I was able to, through a buddy who works at the FBI, set up an actual counterfeit station in our house to make counterfeit money.

Wahlberg: That's random.

Q: What's the worst parenting advice you've ever gotten?

Wahlberg: "Just give them a little drink."

Ferrell: "Let them figure it out themselves"—that never goes well. Probably to have them sit way back in coach on a flight. When (my friends) travel, their kids always sit back there. I'm like, "Don't you sit next to your kids?" And they're like, "Nah, they're fine."

Wahlberg: It saves money.

Ferrell: It does save money and gives you some quiet time.

Q: What are some parenting tips to survive Christmas?

Ferrell: Believe it or not, I was with all three of my boys at a Toys 'R' Us on Black Friday buying Nerf guns. It wasn't that bad.

Wahlberg: Have fun. Enjoy it.

Ferrell: Yeah, it doesn't have to be a big deal. Don't give them everything on their list. Make them make their own toys. Go out in the garage, give them a bunch of plywood, hammer and nails.

Q: Do your kids still believe in Santa?

Ferrell: The 5-year-old does, for sure. The 8-year-old is teetering on the brink.

Wahlberg: They haven't told him?

Ferrell: They haven't. I've told the 11-year-old. It's a weird tradition, right? To tell the older kids to keep the lie going?

Q: Having starred in two films together now, why do you think you work so well together?

Ferrell: Mark and I can just pick up where we left off. We both think the same things are funny, in terms of how you approach a character in a comedy.

Wahlberg: We both agree that you're very funny. We talk about that all the time.

Ferrell: We both agree that I'm really funny. I'll be like, "Hey, Mark, you know what we haven't talked about today? How funny I am." So that dynamic is so great and so natural.

Q: In The Other Guys, you played mismatched detectives, and in Daddy's Home, mismatched dads. What kind of duo would you like to be next?

Wahlberg: Anything to do with hip-hop would be great. A duo of rappers.

Ferrell: Who are actually superheroes in disguise.

Wahlberg: Super-mommas.

Ferrell: We're women? Oh, OK.

Mom worries that kids get attention only for their looks

DEAR ABBY: All children are beautiful to their parents. My three children are of mixed race and get a lot of attention because of it. The boys are aloof about random compliments they receive from strangers. However, I'm worried about the pressure it may put on my daughter to be "pretty."

I care more about my daughter's character than her looks, but I'm concerned that if I say that to these people, it will come off as rude. Also, I don't want her to think I don't think she's pretty. How can I respond in a way that isn't rude to well-intentioned strangers, but at the same time allows me to make a statement about the importance of character over beauty?

MOM OF BEAUTIES

DEAR MOM: When someone exclaims that your child is beautiful, accept the compliment and say something like this: "Yes, my child IS beautiful, but more important, she is beautiful on the inside." It will reinforce the message to your daughter that character is equally, if not more important, than physical beauty.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: Isn't the rule of etiquette that when a gift is given, it belongs to the recipient? My mother sends gifts to our infant daughter. She is the first grandbaby, and my mother is a doting grandparent. My question is what should happen when my child outgrows the items -- clothing, shoes, toys, etc. My mother expects me to put them all in a storage bin and return them to her.

There have been times when I have packed up things to give to friends who have younger daughters than ours, or taken them to a resale shop. My mother then becomes upset that I'm not returning the items to her. She is saving them for my sister, who isn't even pregnant yet.

While I have no issue with saving some things for a potential niece, my friends need these things NOW, and I feel strange essentially being obligated to return them. Is my mom out of line? It's off-putting to receive a gift that comes with a return clause.

CONFUSED IN CENTRAL TEXAS

DEAR CONFUSED: It appears your mother is not only a doting grandma, but also someone who is determined to get a double bang for her buck. Once given, a gift DOES belong to the recipient. Otherwise, it's not a gift but a loan.

And yes, however well-intentioned your mother may be, she is out of line to demand that everything she has given be returned to her. (I mean, what will she do if your sister has only boys?)

■■■

DEAR ABBY: When I'm dining out, sometimes the flatware is wrapped and banded in a large paper napkin. Do I use this napkin for cleaning myself, or do I ask for more napkins?

UNSURE IN CONNECTICUT

DEAR UNSURE: Place the napkin in your lap, and if you would like to have more, do not hesitate to ask your server. It is not a breach of etiquette to do so.

■■■

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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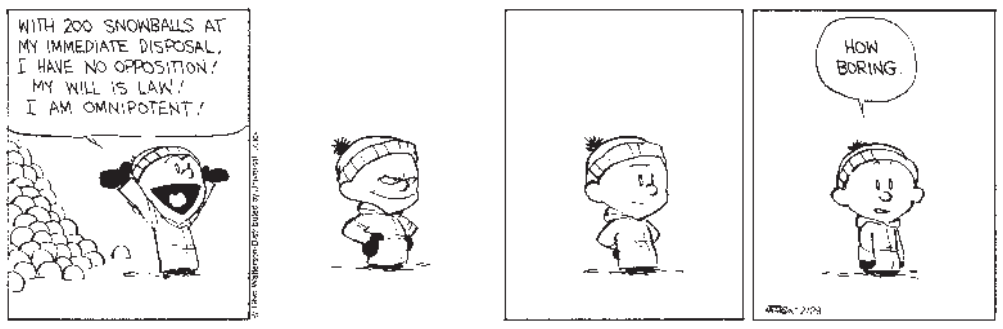
Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis

FELLOW FLEAS, OUR TRAVELS ARE OVER!
WE HAVE JOURNEYED THIS VAST CAT
AND WE WILL SETTLE HERE!
I HOPE THEIR CROPS FAIL
JIM DAVIS 12 29

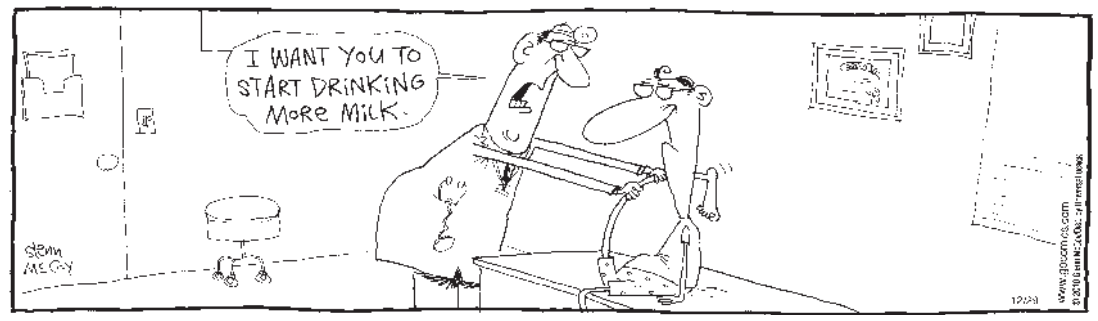
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

YOU HAVE BIG PLANS FOR NEW YEAR'S?
NAH.
I'M JUST GONNA STAY IN AND TAKE IT EASY THIS YEAR.
ME AND THE GALS CONSIDERED HITTING VEGAS, BUT Y'KNOW...
YEAH, THAT'S A LOT OF WORK.
RIGHT? I'M JUST GONNA CUDDLE UP WITH A JUICE BOX AND SOME SEACREST.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

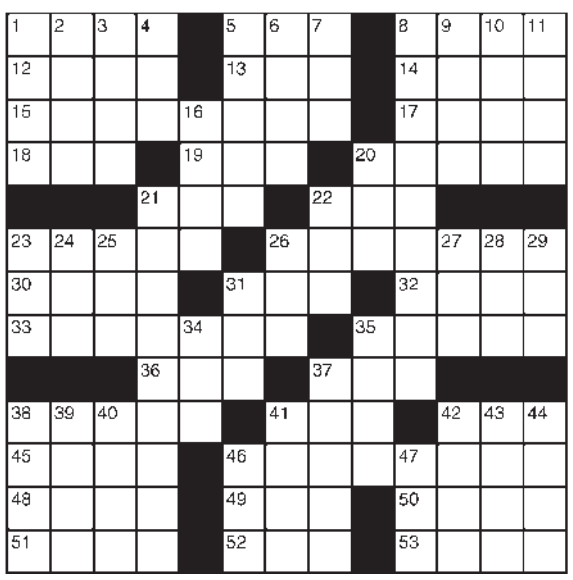
ACROSS
1 French singer Edith
5 Sandy's bark
8 Star in Cetus
12 "Back in the —"
13 Bit of gel
14 Rara —
15 Double order of fish?
17 Departed
18 Wonderment
19 Raises
20 Green pasta sauce
21 Denver hrs.
22 Skye cap
23 Book after Jonah
26 Where Fez is
30 Run — (go nuts)
31 Years on end
32 Letter opener?
33 Hot chili pepper
35 Cat calls
36 Irate
37 Sun, in Spain
38 "The Crucible" setting
41 "Alice" waitress
42 Lamb's cry
45 Scent
46 Pole on a schooner
48 Tie up a ship
49 List-ending abbr.
50 Very proper
51 Catch sight of
52 "For shame!"
53 Salty septet

DOWN
1 Fast cat
2 Caesar's "vidi"
3 Tennis great Arthur
4 Sat. preceder
5 Conform
6 Fan cheers
7 Mob-chasing org.
8 Man in a fashion show
9 Currier's partner
10 Falling-out
11 Regarding
16 Order to sled dogs
20 Golfer's goal
21 Celebrate
22 Freight weight
23 Brit's raincoat
24 "— little teapot ..."
25 Slyly shy
26 Bossy Stooge
27 Corp. VIP
28 Crow hello
29 Surgery ctrs.
31 Conclude
34 '60s war zone
35 Night light?
37 Like icy roads
38 "— Like It Hot"
39 Uproars
40 Air show stunt
41 Waller or Domino
42 Foal's mom
43 Laos setting
44 24-hr. cash sources
46 Ran into
47 GI cops

Solution time: 22 mins.

F	A	B			S	H	H		P	O	G	O
O	D	E	R		T	O	A		L	O	A	N
A	E	R	O		_	U	V		Y	O	Y	O
M	E	N	S	A		R	O	A	M			
			E	N	D		C	L	O	S	E	D
M	A	R	T	I	N	I		T	U	T	T	I
O	B	I	T		A	S	P		T	Y	N	E
A	L	T	A	R		H	O	T	H	E	A	D
	E	A	S	E	R		W	A	R			
			T	O	O	N		M	O	V	I	E
O	L	Z	O		B	I	B		C	O	O	L
A	M	E	N		E	C	O		K	I	W	I
F	A	D	E		S	K	Y			D	A	S

Yesterday's answer 12-29



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Alison Brie, 33; Jude Law, 43; Patricia Clarkson, 56; Ted Danson, 68.

Happy Birthday: Use your creative imagination to bring about opportunities this year, and you will discover possibilities and goals that are within your reach. Your ability to pull things together and turn a little into a lot will take others by surprise and put you in a good position for future growth. Embrace change and take control and you will reach your destination. Your numbers are 1, 4, 16, 27, 34, 39, 43.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): You may not see eye-to-eye with everyone, but listening will give you a broader perspective. An offer from someone you have worked with in the past will lead to an interesting position. Don't allow anger or negativity to hold you back. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Planning a business trip or signing up for a course that will help you get ahead in the new year will give you reason to celebrate New Year's Eve. Romance is in the stars and will enhance your personal life. ✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Emotional deception and impractical plans will be costly if you don't regroup and reconsider the pros and cons. Look for ways to stabilize your situation in order to build greater security for you and the ones you love. ✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Find a way to cut corners. A better budget or lower overhead will help you avoid disagreements over money matters and keep you on track with paying down debt. Property investments and other assets and possessions could yield a profit. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Someone with experience and knowledge will help you make an important decision. Change won't be easy, but it will be necessary if you want to achieve your goals. Do what's best for you and don't feel guilty if you can't please everyone. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Make plans to get together with peers or to enjoy a little downtime with people you have worked with in the past. Getting involved in activities that include children will inspire you to start a new yearly tradition. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Get involved in a cause that will benefit your community. Don't let anyone bait you into an argument that will only lead to disappointment. Consider the changes you will have to make to end the negativity in your life. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): A passionate approach to life and the changes you want to see happen won't please everyone, but it will help you stake your position firmly and attract like-minded people to your side. Save the evening hours for romance. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Trouble with government agencies and institutions will prevail if you have unfinished personal paperwork. Avoid travel or any risky ventures that have the potential to leave you in a vulnerable position. Pay attention. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Keep moving in a positive direction. Stopping to argue a point with someone who will never see things your way is a waste of time. Aim to accomplish what you set out to do, and let others do their own thing. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Your confidence will get a boost and others will take note if you make personal changes. Bringing back an old idea with a new twist will result in interest and excitement from the people you are close to. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Don't let anyone stifle your dreams, but do listen to advice and incorporate what's useful into your plans. A partnership with someone who shares your insight and passion will also contribute to your success. Romance is highlighted. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are unpredictable and entertaining. You are goal-oriented and aggressive.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	4				3		1	
7								9
			9	4	7			
6		5	1		4	9		
		3				2		
		7	6		9	5		3
			4	9	5			
8								4
	6		8				2	

Difficulty Level ★★ 12/29

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's SUDOKU Answer

4	7	8	1	5	2	6	3	9
2	6	5	3	9	4	1	7	8
3	1	9	6	8	7	2	4	5
1	9	2	5	7	6	3	8	4
8	5	4	2	3	1	7	9	6
7	3	6	9	4	8	5	1	2
5	4	1	8	6	3	9	2	7
9	8	3	7	2	5	4	6	1
6	2	7	4	1	9	8	5	3

Difficulty Level ★ 12/29

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR EGGPLANT? Solution: 10 letters

R	F	S	U	M	M	U	H	R	E	P	P	E	P	Q
E	A	E	H	C	I	U	Q	C	V	K	S	E	S	U
R	X	I	E	G	P	U	O	S	U	T	A	E	E	I
O	E	T	V	B	T	S	L	A	E	B	L	B	H	N
A	E	T	R	A	T	I	Ⓞ	L	R	D	E	I	C	O
S	L	A	S	A	C	R	E	Ⓥ	O	Y	E	D	I	A
T	L	P	O	E	C	M	O	O	Ⓔ	D	C	E	W	T
E	I	B	U	F	O	T	N	L	E	Ⓝ	U	D	D	S
D	U	Q	U	E	S	A	D	I	L	L	A	A	N	A
E	O	C	A	S	S	E	R	O	L	E	S	E	A	P
L	T	Y	H	E	M	F	R	I	T	T	E	R	S	S
K	A	R	M	E	A	T	B	A	L	L	S	B	P	A
C	T	R	A	H	E	R	B	S	A	Z	Z	I	P	L
I	A	U	A	K	A	S	S	U	O	M	H	D	D	A
P	R	C	H	I	C	K	E	N	O	C	A	B	N	D

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Add, Bacon, Bake, Beef, Boats, Breaded, Casserole, Caviar, Cheese, Chicken, Chips, Cubed, Curry, Dips, Extract, Fried, Fritters, Herbs, Hummus, Meatballs, Medley, Moussaka, Noodles, Omelets, Oven, Parmesan, Pasta, Patties, Pepper, Pickled, Pizza, Quesadilla, Quiche, Quinoa, Ratatouille, Roasted, Roll, Salad, Sandwiches, Sauce, Slice, Soup, Tofu

Yesterday's Answer: Elm Street

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Saipan Tribune

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College graduate degree in Nursing from a school approved by the Commonwealth Board of Nurse Examiners (CBNE), with two (2) years of work experience as a nurse or working in a similar capacity in a health care or medical setting. Must pass U.S. NCLEX-RN and is licensed as an RN by CBNE. Must have the ability to work proficiently in a fast paced clinical environment. Ability to speak and translate in the Chinese language is preferred.

(1) Midwife (part-time)
College graduate completion of accredited Midwifery training program approved by the Commonwealth Board of Nurse Examiners (CBNE), with five (5) years of work experience in Midwifery. Must be licensed under Health Care Professions Licensing Board as a Midwife in the CNMI. Must have the ability to work proficiently in a fast paced clinical environment.

All positions close 5:00pm on Friday, January 15, 2016.
Applications are available at the Marianas Medical Center. Applications should include a resume and evidence of education degree(s) and professional licenses claimed. A valid police clearance no more than six (6) months old is required with each application. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Marianas Medical Center is an equal opportunity employer.

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PROGRAMMER ANALYST
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Applications can be obtained and submitted at L&T Group of Companies, Ltd. Human Resources Office located on the 2nd Floor, JP Center Building at Beach Road, Garapan. Salaries will commensurate with qualifications and experience. To be considered, applications must be submitted no later than 5:00pm, Friday, January 8, 2016.

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Salary: $6.50 to $8.00 per hour

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High School Diploma or equivalent. Have at least three months to one year of related work experienced. Knowledge of principle and processes for providing excellent personal and customer service skills. Including handling large group of arrivals. Excellent interpersonal skills with a positive attitude, professional, neat and well groomed at all times. Must be able to speak and understand English and preferably fluent in Korean language. Computer proficiency and email communication. Willing to work in flexible shifts, days, evenings, weekend and holidays and be able to stand for prolonged period of time.
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Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality, Business Management or equivalent. At least three to five years working experienced management level in a hotel industry. Knowledgeable in hotel night audit. Knowledge of principle and process for providing customer and personal services and interpret financial data like budgets and expenses reports. Requiring computer skills, mathematics and basic accounting. Speaking additional language like Japanese or Chinese and or Korean is an advantage. Knowledgeable in Hotel system like Fidelio and Opera is preferred but not required. Experienced in handling large group of arrivals. Acquired hospitality related program is asset. A "People Person". A d must be able to stand for a prolonged period of time.
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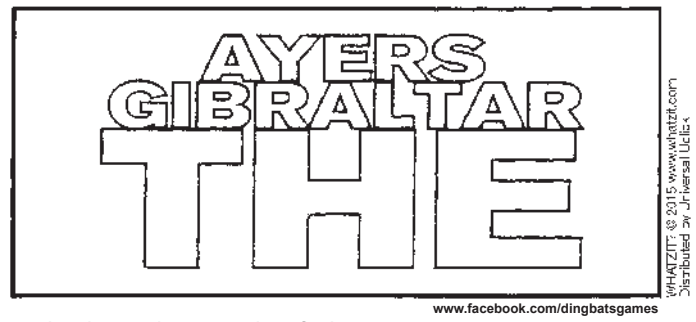

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Panthers' bid for perfect season ends with loss to Falcons

ATLANTA (AP)—For the first time this season, there was no big comeback for Carolina. No clutch play at a key moment. No costly mistake by its opponent in the last few minutes.

The perfect start is over for Cam Newton and the Panthers.

After Julio Jones' spectacular 70-yard touchdown reception in the third quarter gave Atlanta the lead, the Panthers came up empty in two possessions in the final three minutes as the Falcons held on for a 20-13 victory on Sunday.

Carolina (14-1) got the ball for the last time with 90 seconds left and no timeouts remaining. Newton completed a 19-yard pass to Corey Brown on first down but fumbled when stripped by Vic Beasley Jr. on the following play. Adrian Clayborn recovered for the Falcons, wrapping up the win.

It was Carolina's first regular-season loss since Nov. 30, 2014, at Minnesota. The Panthers did not get into the end zone after their opening drive.

"That's unacceptable, particularly at this time of the year," Newton said.

Newton said coach Ron Rivera said the team played as if it was waiting for a turnaround that never came.

Newton, the Panthers' MVP candidate with the Superman celebration pose, was just OK. He threw for 142 yards and was held without a touchdown pass for only the second time this season. He ran for 46 yards, including an 8-yard scoring run on the Panthers' opening drive.

After that, Carolina's only points came on two second-half field goals from Graham Gano.

Carolina's 13 points set a season low. The Panthers had scored at least 24 points in 13 straight games.

"We're 14-1 now," Newton said. "We put ourselves in a situation that we can use this as fuel to the fire."

The Falcons (8-7) spoiled the Panthers' bid for a perfect season only two weeks after being humbled in a 38-0 loss at Carolina.

"I viewed this game as a measuring stick for us," Atlanta coach Dan Quinn said. "I wanted to see how our team would respond after the game up there."

Matt Ryan threw for 306 yards and one touchdown for the Falcons. Devonta Freeman ran for 73 yards and a TD.

Carolina needed a win or tie or an Arizona loss or tie against Green Bay to clinch home-field advantage for the NFC playoffs. But the Cardinals (13-2) cruised to a 38-8 victory over the Packers.

Jones got the best of his much-anticipated matchup with Carolina cornerback Josh Norman. Jones had nine catches for 178 yards, including the dramatic touchdown catch.

Jones reached above linebacker Luke Kuechly for the catch as Panthers safety Kurt Coleman slipped, leaving a clear path for Jones to the end zone. The play put Atlanta ahead to stay at 14-10.

"Julio made a great play on it," Kuechly said. "That's really all there is. I thought I was in a good spot, but he went up and got it."

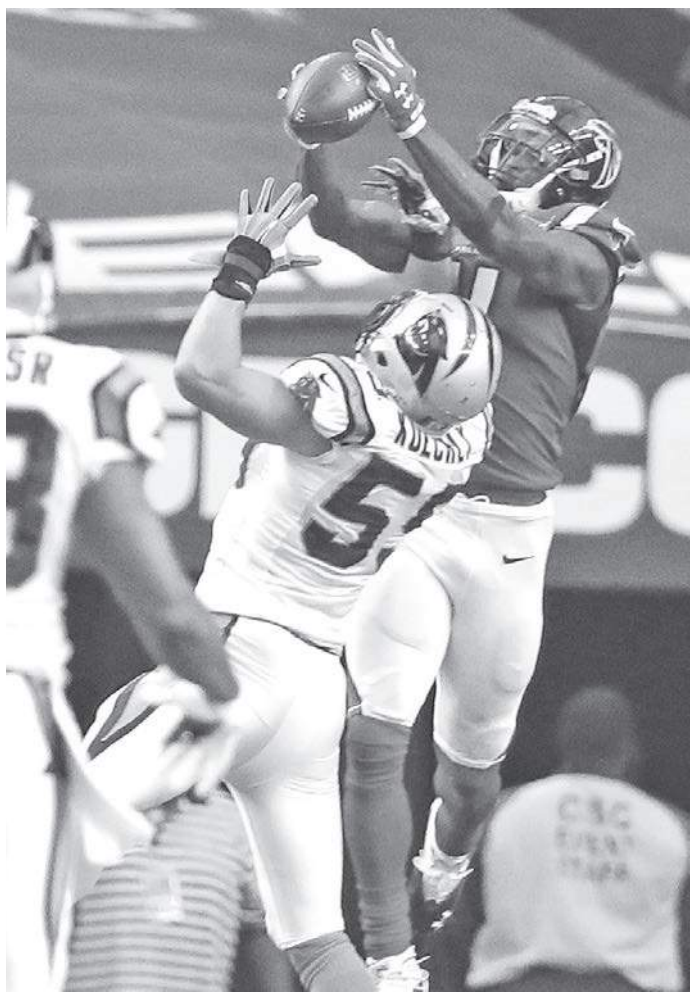
Atlanta's Shayne Graham kicked field goals of 37 and 54 yards in the final three minutes.

Carolina trailed 14-10 in the fourth quarter when Ryan mishandled a shotgun snap from the Panthers 37. Norman recovered the fumble, setting up Gano's 47-yard field goal that cut Atlanta's lead to 14-13.

Carolina's defense drew two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, including one on cornerback Charles Tillman that helped keep the Falcons' marathon touchdown drive alive on their first possession.

The Falcons were stopped on a third-down incomplete pass before Tillman became entangled with Atlanta wide receiver Roddy White. Tillman drew the flag to keep Atlanta's offense on the field for a 16-play, 80-yard touchdown drive that lasted more than 9 minutes. Freeman scored from the 4 on the first play of the second quarter for a 7-7 tie.

Rivera said he would talk with the league office about the penalty but said "There's nothing we can do about it. We didn't get off the field. We're not making any excuses."



AP

Atlanta Falcons wide receiver Julio Jones (11) makes a catch against Carolina Panthers middle linebacker Luke Kuechly (59) during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 27, 2015, in Atlanta.

Jets 26, Patriots 20, OT

In East Rutherford, N.J., Eric Decker's 6-yard touchdown catch on the first drive of overtime—after New England chose to kick off—lifted the Jets into position to make the playoffs.

A win next week at Buffalo gives the Jets a wild-card berth.

New England (12-3) won the OT coin toss and surprisingly elected to give the ball to the Jets (10-5). New York used a career-long 48-yard reception by Quincy Enunwa and a 20-yard pass to Brandon Marshall to move into scoring position. And then, Ryan Fitzpatrick hit Decker on a fade behind Super Bowl hero Malcolm Butler for New York's fifth straight victory.

Marshall had two TD catches and also became the first NFL player with 100 receptions in six seasons.

Tom Brady hit James White for a 9-yard score with 1:55 to go, forcing OT.

Cardinals 38, Packers 8

In Glendale, Ariz., Arizona sacked Aaron Rodgers eight times and returned two of his fumbles for touchdowns to clinch a first-round playoff bye.

Carson Palmer threw for 257 yards and two touchdowns for Arizona (13-2).

In all, the Packers were sacked nine times in their most one-sided loss of the season. Dwight Freeney had three and Calais Campbell 2 1/2. Cory Redding rambled 36 yards with one of the fumbles for a score, Jerraud Powers took another 5 yards for a touchdown.

Green Bay (10-5) is home against Minnesota in its regular-season finale next Sunday night, with the NFC North title at stake.

Vikings 49, Giants 17

In Minneapolis, Adrian Peterson ran for 104 yards and a touchdown over three quarters, Harrison Smith took one of Eli Manning's three interceptions into the end zone and Minnesota clinched a playoff spot with a victory over New York Giants on a frigid night.

Teddy Bridgewater turned in another sharp December performance, and Blair Walsh made five field goals for the Vikings.

With Peterson relaxing on the sideline, Jerick McKinnon rushed for two more touchdowns in the fourth quarter, including a 68-yard romp through a disinterested defense with the temperature down to 11 degrees.

The Giants (6-9) played with suspended receiver Odell Beckham Jr.

Rams 23, Seahawks 17

In Seattle, Todd Gurley scored on a 2-yard TD run with 10:34 left, Akeem Ayers returned a fumble 45 yards for a touchdown in the first quarter as St Louis ended Seattle's five-game winning streak.

St. Louis swept the season series from the Seahawks (9-6) having won 34-31 in overtime in Week 1. The Rams (7-8) flustered quarterback Russell Wilson.

Gurley rushed for 85 yards on 19 carries. Case Keenum won his third straight start for the Rams, completing 14 of 23 passes for 103 yards and a 28-yard touchdown pass to Kenny Britt in the second quarter.

Chiefs 17, Browns 13

In Kansas City, Mo., Alex Smith threw two touchdown passes for Kansas City, and the game clock finally stopped Johnny Manziel as the Chiefs won a team record-tying ninth consecutive game.

Smith threw for 125 yards and ran for 54, helping Kansas City (10-5) clinch a playoff berth when Pittsburgh lost to Baltimore moments later.

The Chiefs jumped to a 17-3 halftime lead, but the offense cooled off and Manziel pumped some life into the Browns (3-12).

The Heisman Trophy winner led Cleveland to 10 straight points, then took over at his 30 with 1:52 left and no timeouts. The Browns picked up three first downs, and Manziel hit Darius Jennings on fourth-and-10 from the Chiefs 32. But time expired before Manziel could get another snap off. He spiked his helmet in frustration.

Ravens 20, Steelers 17

In Baltimore, Ryan Mallet threw for a career-high 274 yards in his first start with Baltimore in leading the Ravens to one of the biggest upsets of this contentious rivalry.

The Ravens (5-10) had lost three straight, the last two by a combined 69-20 score. In this one, however, they turned back a team riding a three-game winning streak and striving for a playoff berth.

Baltimore swept Pittsburgh (9-6) for the first time since 2011. The Steelers remain in playoff contention.

Making his seventh career start, Mallett went 28 for 41 with a touchdown and no interceptions. Signed by the Ravens on Dec. 15, he was the fourth quarterback to start for Baltimore in a span of six weeks.

Pittsburgh's Ben Roethlisberger threw two interceptions and was sacked three times.

Texans 34, Titans 6

In Nashville, Tenn., Brandon Weeden scored his first career rushing touchdown and threw for two more as Houston took a big step toward clinching the AFC South ,

Houston (8-7), which wraps up the regular season by hosting Jacksonville, couldn't clinch outright when Indianapolis beat Miami 18-12.

The Texans forced four turnovers and turned them into 17 points. Quintin Demps returned a fumble 33 yards for a touchdown less than two minutes into the game.

The Texans scored a season high in points despite starting their fourth different quarterback this season.

The Titans (3-12) did nothing to hurt their chances at the No. 1 pick in the draft.

Colts 18, Dolphins 12

In Miami Gardens, Fla., third-string quarterback Charlie Whitehurst came off the bench again for Indianapolis, which made a last-minute defensive stand to keep alive their faint playoff hopes.

The Dolphins had a first-and-goal at the 5 with 40 seconds left, but after three consecutive incompletions, rookie center Jamil Douglas appeared to snap the ball prematurely, and Tannehill was sacked by three Colts.

Indy backup quarterback Matt Hasselbeck departed with an injury for the fourth game in a row, and Whitehurst did just enough after entering in the second quarter, completing two scoring drives.

The Colts (7-8) would have been eliminated from the playoff race with a loss. The Dolphins (5-10) were eliminated two weeks ago.

Bills 16, Cowboys 6

In Orchard Park, N.Y., Buffalo rookie Mike Gillislee ran 50 yards for a touchdown with 2:25 remaining to secure the win for the Bills.

Gillislee finished with 93 yards rushing and led a ground attack that totaled 236 yards. Karlos Williams scored on a 1-yard run as the Bills overcame an injury-depleted offense playing without running back LeSean McCoy.

Rookie linebacker A.J. Tarpley had an interception and sealed the win by forcing Lucky Whitehead to fumble on the kickoff return that followed Gillislee's touchdown.

Buffalo (7-8) snapped a two-game skid and won for just the second time in six games. The Cowboys (4-11) lost in quarterback Kellen Moore's first career start.

Bears 26, Buccaneers 21

In Tampa, Fla., Ka'Deem Carey caught a touchdown pass from Jay Cutler and the third-string running back also scored on a 1-yard run to help Chicago Bears end a three-game losing streak.

Carey's 1-yard scoring reception put the Bears (6-9) ahead for good early in the fourth quarter. The second-year pro teamed with Matt Forte and Jeremy Langford to spearhead a rushing attack that produced 174 yards and kept Jameis Winston off the field for long stretches.

The victory was only the second in the past six games for the Bears. Tampa Bay (6-9) has lost four of five, including three straight after rebounding from a slow start.

Lions 32, 49ers 17

In Detroit, Matthew Stafford threw for two touchdowns, including one to Calvin Johnson early in the fourth quarter for Detroit.

The Lions (6-9) have won five of their last seven games, perhaps giving coach Jim Caldwell a chance to keep his job for a third season. The 49ers (4-11) have lost three straight and five of six under first-year coach Jim Tomsula.

Stafford's 1-yard TD pass to Johnson gave Detroit a 12-point lead one play after Tramaine Brock was called for pass interference in the end zone. During the drive, the 49ers were flagged for being offside or in the neutral zone for the seventh time to set a single-game high by an NFL team this year, according to STATS.

Saints 38, Jaguars 27

In New Orleans, Drew Brees passed for 412 yards and three touchdowns despite his injured right foot.

Brees, who tore his plantar fascia ligament during a loss to Detroit last Monday, showed no ill effects of the normally painful injury while completing 25 of 36 passes.

Running back Tim Hightower, who missed the previous three seasons because of a knee injury and subsequent complications, consolidated his recent resurgence with 122 yards and two touchdowns rushing for New Orleans (6-9).

Blake Bortles passed for 368 yards and four TDs for Jacksonville (5-10).

Conley, Green lead Grizzlies past Lakers, 112-96

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Mike Conley scored 19 points, Jeff Green added 17 and the Memphis Grizzlies led from start to finish for a 112-96 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday.

Marc Gasol and Zach Randolph added 16 points apiece, while Courtney Lee contributed 13. Conley and Gasol both connected on 7 of 11 shots and Randolph missed only one of his eight attempts as Memphis shot close to 60 percent for the game before finishing at 56 percent.

Kobe Bryant, playing in only the first and third quarters, scored 19 for the Lakers, with 14 in the opening quarter. Larry Nance Jr. had 17 points and 11 rebounds, while Jordan Clarkson scored 12 points and D'Angelo Russell finished with 10.

Memphis snapped a two-game skid, while Los Angeles lost its third straight and fifth in the last six.

Memphis outscored the Lakers in every quarter except the fourth, when the lead reached 25 before reserves closed out the game. The Grizzlies used their inside game to hold a 44-28 advantage in the paint.

Bryant scored 14 of the Lakers' 23 first-quarter points, but Los Angeles already trailed by nine.

The Memphis lead would reach 59-46 at the break as four Grizzlies were already in double figures, led by 12 points from Gasol and 11 by Conley.

Memphis shot 56 percent for the half, while the Lakers were limited to 36 percent. Los Angeles finished the game at 38 percent.

AP
Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant, center left, and Memphis Grizzlies' Marc Gasol hug at an NBA basketball game Sunday, Dec. 27, 2015, in Memphis, Tenn.

The Grizzlies extended the lead to 22 in the third period before carrying a 92-74 advantage into the fourth. Nance had 13 in the quarter for the Lakers.

Thunder 122, Nuggets 112

In Oklahoma City, Russell Westbrook had 30 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds, and Oklahoma City rallied from an 11-point, second-half deficit to beat Denver.

Kevin Durant recorded his eighth double-double of the season with 26 points and 10 assists for the Thunder, who have won 10 of their last 12 games but were coming off a Christmas Day loss at home to the Chicago Bulls.

Oklahoma City shot a season-best 57.8 percent from the field. The Thunder trailed as late as the 8:13 mark of the fourth quarter before taking control with an 11-2 run that included seven of Enes Kanter's 21 points.

Kenneth Faried had 25 points and 11 points for the Nuggets, who have lost five of their last six games. Denver has lost six straight trips to Oklahoma City.

Celtics 100, Knicks 91

In Boston, Isaiah Thomas had a pair of key baskets and finished with 21 points, Evan Turner scored 19 and Boston won its fourth straight.

Jae Crowder scored 18 points and Kelly Olynyk added 11 points and nine rebounds for Boston. Thomas added eight rebounds and six assists.

Carmelo Anthony led the Knicks with 29 points despite shooting just 11 of 26. Kristaps Porzingis had 16 points and 12 rebounds.

New York, which shot just 37.1 percent, lost its fourth straight.

The Celtics opened an 88-78 lead on Turner's driving basket with 6:11 to play, but the Knicks cut it to 90-85 before Thomas had consecutive driving baskets to push the lead back to nine.

Trail Blazers 98, Kings 94

In Sacramento, Calif., CJ McCollum had 35 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists to lead Portland over Sacramento.

The Blazers outscored Sacramento 18-14 in the fourth quarter to claim their second straight victory. They were coming off a convincing 105-76 win Saturday over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

DeMarcus Cousins had 36 points and six rebounds for the Kings. Omri Casspi had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and Rajon Rondo finished with nine points and 15 assists.

Kings coach George Karl was denied his 1,155th victory, which would have tied him with Phil Jackson for fifth place on the career list.

Meyers Leonard made four 3-pointers and had 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Blazers. Maurice Harkness added 13 points.

SIDEBAR

Jazz's Alec Burks out indefinitely with broken lower leg

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Alec Burks is out indefinitely after breaking his left lower leg against the Clippers on Saturday night. The team announced the fifth-year guard had an MRI Sunday morning that showed a fractured fibula.

Burks is the third major contributor for the Jazz that has been lost for a significant amount of time this season. Starting center Rudy Gobert remains out with a sprained MCL. There is no timetable for his return. Starting point guard Dante Exum is out for the season with a torn ACL.

Burks played in every game this season, averaging a career-high 14.3 points as one of few on the bench that can create offense. He is the third-leading scorer on the team.

Burks broke the bone during a fall late in the second quarter of a 109-104 loss. It does not require surgery.

Manning angrily denies Al Jazeera report he obtained PEDs

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)—Peyton Manning said a report by Al Jazeera set to air Sunday that suggests he obtained performance-enhancing drugs was "completely fabricated, complete trash, garbage."

Manning angrily denied allegations to ESPN on Sunday morning he used HGH in 2011.

The report is based on secret recordings made by a former intern at an Indianapolis anti-aging institute who now says he fabricated the allegations.

Al Jazeera sent British hurdler Liam Collins undercover to expose performance-enhancing drug use in sports. Collins made secret recordings of Charles Sly, a former intern at the Guyer Institute, where Manning was treated in 2011 following four neck surgeries.

Sly has recanted the claim that Manning used HGH. Sly, who also named other high-profile athletes on the secret recordings, told Al Jazeera the statements attributed to him "are absolutely false and incorrect." Sly told ESPN that he fabricated the allegations to test Collins' legitimacy.

Manning denied ever using PEDs and blasted the report for suggesting he got drugs that were shipped to his wife, Ashley.

"I can't speak for any other athlete. I know what I've done, I know how hard I've worked in my 18 years of playing in the NFL. There are no shortcuts in the NFL. I've done it the long way, I've done it the hard way. And to insinuate anything otherwise is a complete and total joke, it's defamation and it really ticks me off," Manning told ESPN.

The Broncos and Colts also issued statements Sunday morning in support of Manning.

"Knowing Peyton Manning and everything he stands for, the Denver Broncos support him 100 percent," the team said. "These are false claims made to Al Jazeera, and we don't believe the report."

The Colts, whom Manning played for from 1998-2011, issued a statement calling the report "utterly ridiculous."

"We are thoroughly familiar with Peyton's tireless work habits, his medical history, and, most importantly, his integrity," the Colts said.

"We also note that the 'source' of this allegation has since recanted his story."

Manning joined the Broncos in 2012 and had a record-setting run, going 47-15 until he tore the plantar fascia in his left foot on Nov. 15. That was the same day he broke Brett Favre's NFL record for most career passing yards.

He's been sidelined ever since, and backup Brock Osweiler will make his sixth straight start Monday night when the Broncos (10-2) host the Bengals (11-3).

"Throughout his NFL career, particularly during his four seasons with the Broncos, Peyton has shown nothing but respect for the game," the Broncos said. "Our organization is confident Peyton does things the right way, and we do not find this story to be credible."

Manning said he sought holistic treatments such as hyperbaric oxygen and nutrient therapy at the Guyer Institute with the consent of the Colts training and medical staff.

Al Jazeera's report claims Manning received HGH from the Indianapolis anti-aging clinic in 2011 while he was still with the Colts. It said the drug, which was later banned by the NFL in the 2011 collective bargaining agreement, was delivered to his wife so that the quarterback's name was never attached to the shipments.

Manning told ESPN he's never taken anything that was ever sent to his wife nor has he ever used PEDs.

"Absolutely not. And what hurts me the most about this is whoever this guy is, this slapstick trying to insinuate that in 2011, when I more or less had a broken neck," he said. "... But I had a broken neck and I busted my butt to get healthy, put in a lot of hard work. I saw a lot of doctors."

The report names other high-profile athletes as having obtained PEDs.

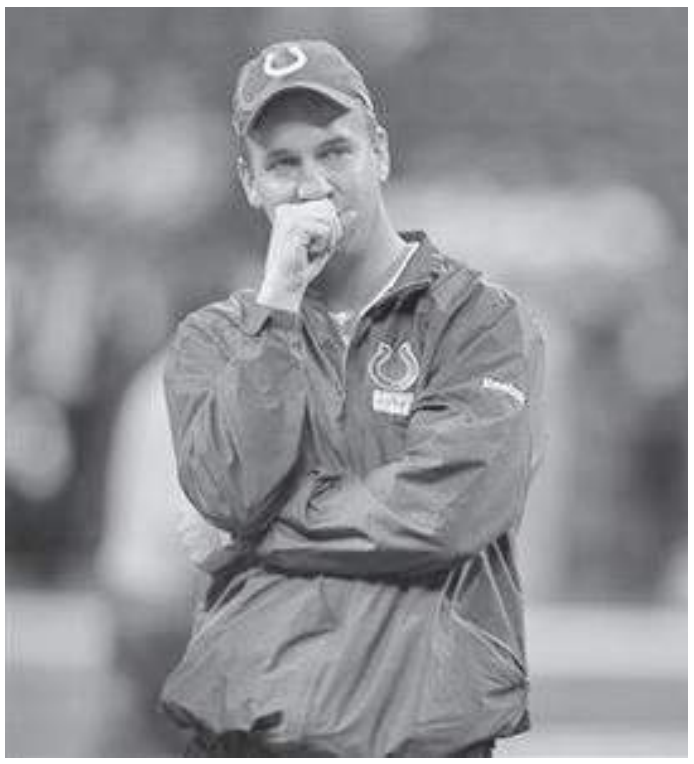
The attorney for Phillies slugger Ryan Howard said his client will fight claims made in the Al Jazeera report that his client received performance-enhancing drugs.

William Burck called the claims made against Howard and Ryan Zimmerman of the Washington Nationals "outright lies."

"It's inexcusable and irresponsible that Al Jazeera would provide a platform and broadcast outright lies about Mr. Howard and Mr. Zimmerman," Burck said in a statement.

"The extraordinary reckless claims made against our clients in this report are completely false and rely on a source who has already recanted his claims. We will go to court to hold Al Jazeera and other responsible parties accountable for smearing our clients' good names," Burck said.

Manning said he had to take time off from his throwing session inside the Broncos' field house to address this story.



AP
In this Dec. 22, 2011, file photo, Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning stands on the field before the team's NFL football game against the Houston Texans in Indianapolis.

Voyagers lose but still Tuesday League leader

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Jokers IT&E Voyagers dropped a 7-6 decision over sister team StraightBlackBall but remain on top of the standings in the Budweiser-Saipan Billiards Association Open 8-Ball Tuesday League after last week's matches held in various bars on the island.

Rodel Dela Cruz secured the win for StraightBlackBal after dispatching the Voyagers' Mark Butac in the final game of the Singles 8-Ball event for a 7-4 tally.

But with all games need to be played, after each win and loss is counted on the standings, the Voyagers swept the last two Partner's 8-Ball events.

The Voyagers still holds a league-best 55-36 record followed by the Destroyers, another sister team, with a 51-40 card. The Jokers Docomo Hustlers are third (48-43).

The StraightBlackBall (41-50), Jonny's Titans (40-38), and the Jonny's Crazy 8 (38-53) complete the standings.

In other games, the Titans escaped with a 7-6 win over the Voyagers completing 8-5 victories each against the Destroyers and the Titans while the Hustlers slipped past Crazy 8, 7-6.

In the Thursday League, which played last Dec. 17 before taking a two-week break, the Jokers Homeboyz and the Wild Bill's Rack 'N' Roll each pulled off 8-5 wins over the Jokers Wildboyz and Jonny's Team SCS while the Wild Bill's Wild Wild West edged top ranked National Alamo Car Rental, 7-6.

Alamo is up by a win (48-30) over the Homeboyz (47-31), while the Wildboyz are a close third at 43-35. The Wild Wild West (35-43), Rack 'N' Roll (33-45), and Team SCS (28-50) are the other squads.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Jokers StraightBlackBall is trying to keep up with the leaders in the Tuesday 8-Ball League.

There won't be any games on Thursday, Dec. 31, with matches resuming on Jan. 7 next year with the Wild Wild West and the Rack 'N' Roll facing off while Team SCS takes on the Homeboyz and Alamo hosting the Wildboyz.

Emon Lodge caging eyes Jan. 3 opening; meeting tomorrow

Organizers of the 2015 Emon Lodge No. 179 Brotherhood Basketball League are hoping to kick off action at the Civic Center Basketball Court this Sunday.

Bong Malasarte, who is one of the league's coordinators, said they are done cleaning and painting the Susupe court and will put up the boards and the rings this week in time for Sunday's opener. He added that there were delays in the kick-off because of the weather and they were scheduled to fix the rings earlier, but one of them was stolen last week so they had to find a replacement.

Malasarte also said that a meeting this Wednesday will take place to finalize details of the opening. Representatives of participating teams are asked to attend the 5:30pm meeting at the Civic Center court.

So far, eight teams have showed interest in the open division of the Emon Lodge caging, according to Pepe Crisostomo, who is also one of the coordinators of the competition. Crisostomo said teams led by Marlon Sison, Cesar Barrozo, and Marvin Deocares are entered in the league, along with Shirley's Coffee Shop, Joeten, and GMI Market. Armatech may also field a team and Crisostomo is awaiting confirmation from one more squad.

Games in the Emon Lodge caging will be played every Sunday for now. Two matches each in the morning and afternoon will be played, but organizers have plans to fix the lighting at the court to hold evening games.

For more information, contact Malasarte at 285-5525 or Crisostomo at 785-9012. ***(Roselyn B. Monroyo)***

Source: Murphy agrees to 3-year deal with Nationals

By RONALD BLUM
AP BASEBALL WRITER

Second baseman Daniel Murphy and the Washington Nationals have agreed to a three-year, $37.5 million contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity Thursday night because the agreement, first reported by ESPN, was subject to a successful physical.

Drafted by the Mets in 2006, the 30-year-old starred in October when he homered in a record six straight postseason games and was voted the MVP in the Mets' National League Championship Series victory over the Chicago Cubs. But he made key errors in the fourth and fifth games of New York's five-game World Series loss to the Kansas City Royals.

Murphy hit .281 this year with a career-best 14 homers and 73 RBIs. In seven seasons, all with the Mets, he has a .288 average with 62 homers and 402 RBIs.

Murphy became a free agent after the season and rejected the Mets' $15.8 million qualifying offer.

Washington loses its first-round draft pick, the 16th overall, and the Mets gain a compensation-round pick. The Nationals will have compensation-round picks for Jordan Zimmermann and Ian Desmond.

New York already has replaced Murphy with free agent second baseman Neil Walker.

The Nationals had spent much of the offseason being thwarted in pursuit of additions, including attempts to get a second baseman or left-handed hitter.

They failed in bids to sign free agents Ben Zobrist, Jason Heyward and reliever Darren O'Day, and were unable to finalize a trade to acquire second baseman Brandon Phillips from Cincinnati.

Washington entered last season with World Series aspirations but failed to make the playoffs. The Nationals remade their starting infield, letting Desmond become a free agent and trading away Yunel Escobar. They hired Dusty Baker as manager after firing Matt Williams.

Murphy is not considered a top defender, but the Nationals might be hoping to overcome that with superb fielder Danny Espinosa at shortstop.

MJD

From Page 28

to 18 at the break, 53-35. Randy Mungcal, who had 7 points in the first quarter, played even better in the second, tallying 10, while Jun Tabora chipped 8 after making only 2 in the opening canto to widen the gap.

Facing a big deficit, CES failed to make enough headway in the second half to move closer and at least bring MJD's lead down to single digits. It did not help that CES got consistent contributions only from Sonny Ebuen and John Capuyon.

MJD went on to pull away further in the second half and reach the century mark with its balance scoring. Five MJD players ended up scoring in double figures, while three more combined for 22 markers. Mungcal led MJD with his 20 points, while Alex Ocampo and Tabora logged 18 apiece. Jun Alipio and Jorge De Guzman added 12 each and Alfred Rosario, Jojo Parcutillo, and Bobby Sampang teamed up for 22. Zaldy Deocares rounded up MJD's box scores with his 4 markers.

Capuyon had 18 to pace CES, which got 17 from Ebuen, while the rest of the team picked up garbage points.

MJD 106 – Mungcal 20, Ocampo 18, Tabora 18, Alipio 12, De Guzman 12, Rosario 8, Parcutillo 8, Sampang 6, Z. Deocares 4.

CES 75 – Capuyon 18, S. Ebuen 17, Tibayan 9, De Jesus 9, Abadilla 8, Dacomos 4, Tobias 2, Echavez 2, Tengco 2.

Scoring by quarters: 25-15, 53-35, 80-54, 106-75.

TDI

From Page 28

clutch free throws that helped seal the deal for the team. CUC scored its last 4 points from the foul line to nose out Docomo, which played catch up right at the get-go.

John Santos, Alain Nunez, and Bo Simada backed up Manglona, chipping in 27, 19, and 16 points, respectively. Ryan Sanciangco top-scored for Docomo with his 29 markers.

First Game

CUC 102 – Manglona 36, Santos 27, Nunez 19, Simada 16, Camacho 4.

Docomo 98 – Sanciangco 29, Diaz 25, Manibusan 14, Joson 11, Mendiola 7, Griffin 4, Sanchez 2, McCale 2, Lizama 2, Sablan 2.

Scoring by quarters: 26-21, 50-43, 75-67, 102-98.

Second Game

TDI 92 – Velasco 37, Arreza 27, Pollisco 14, Manipon 12, Lumayag 2.

Mariana Resort 82 – Manglona 45, Lifoifoi 13, Bansil 11, Capuli 9, Lacbayo 2, Litulumar 4.

Scoring by quarters: 17-29, 41-53, 67-68, 92-82.

IAKOPO

From Page 28

hind World No. 10 Japan, South Korea (25), Kazakhstan (43), Philippines (53), Malaysia (57), Singapore (59), Chinese-Taipei (66), and China (69)—since it joined Asia Rugby, the region's governing body, in 1998.

Guam is also fresh from winning the Asia Rugby Championship Division III East title in Jakarta, Indonesia last June.

Iakopo said he is in contact with Guam national rugby union team member Leonard Calvo, who was part of the squad in the 2012 Asian Five Nations Division III, on how they could hold clinics here on Saipan.

"We're going to do this slowly, step by step. I already have contacts who could help me in holding players and coaches clinics here on Saipan. I also played against Samoans and American Samoans and they could help me bring the All Blacks," said Iakopo.

The All Blacks are New Zealand's national rugby union team, the reigning World Cup champions. The All Blacks won their third World Cup title after beating Australia, 34-17, in the finals last Oct. 31 in Twickenham Stadium in London, England.

Iakopo said players who are seeing action in the Commonwealth Football League Association could easily transition to rugby.

"I'm already in touch with John Blanco and other CFL guys. They can easily transition in playing rugby. Football and rugby are almost the same. All they need to learn are the fundamentals of rugby and the rules."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	19	12	.613	—
Boston	18	13	.581	1
New York	14	18	.438	5½
Brooklyn	8	22	.267	10½
Philadelphia	2	30	.063	17½

Southeast Division

Atlanta	20	12	.625	—
Miami	18	11	.621	½
Orlando	17	13	.567	2
Charlotte	16	13	.552	2½
Washington	14	14	.500	4

Central Division

Cleveland	19	9	.679	—
Indiana	17	12	.586	2½
Chicago	16	12	.571	3
Detroit	17	14	.548	3½
Milwaukee	12	19	.387	8½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	26	6	.813	—
Dallas	17	13	.567	8
Memphis	17	16	.515	9½
Houston	16	16	.500	10
New Orleans	10	20	.333	15

Northwest Division

Oklahoma City	21	10	.677	—
Utah	12	16	.429	7½
Portland	13	20	.394	9
Denver	12	19	.387	9
Minnesota	11	19	.367	9½

Pacific Division

Golden State	28	1	.966	—
L.A. Clippers	18	13	.581	11
Sacramento	12	18	.400	16½
Phoenix	12	20	.375	17½
L.A. Lakers	5	26	.161	24

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	12	3	0	.800	455	295
N.Y. Jets	10	5	0	.667	370	292
Buffalo	7	8	0	.467	357	342
Miami	5	10	0	.333	290	379

South

Houston	8	7	0	.533	309	307
Indianapolis	7	8	0	.467	303	384
Jacksonville	5	10	0	.333	370	418
Tennessee	3	12	0	.200	275	393

North

y-Cincinnati	11	3	0	.786	378	243
Pittsburgh	9	6	0	.600	395	307
Baltimore	5	10	0	.333	312	377
Cleveland	3	12	0	.200	266	404

West

Denver	10	4	0	.714	308	259
x-Kansas City	10	5	0	.667	382	270
Oakland	7	8	0	.467	342	376
San Diego	4	11	0	.267	300	371

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

y-Washington	8	7	0	.533	354	356
Philadelphia	6	9	0	.400	342	400
N.Y. Giants	6	9	0	.400	390	407
Dallas	4	11	0	.267	252	340

South

y-Carolina	14	1	0	.933	462	298
Atlanta	8	7	0	.533	322	325
Tampa Bay	6	9	0	.400	332	379
New Orleans	6	9	0	.400	388	459

North

x-Green Bay	10	5	0	.667	355	303
x-Minnesota	10	5	0	.667	345	289
Detroit	6	9	0	.400	334	380
Chicago	6	9	0	.400	315	373

West

y-Arizona	13	2	0	.867	483	277
x-Seattle	9	6	0	.600	387	271
St. Louis	7	8	0	.467	264	311
San Francisco	4	11	0	.267	219	371

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

2nd Marianas PaddleFest race

PHOTOS By JON PEREZ

Dino Manning, left, and other volunteers teach kids how to balance on a paddleboard during one of the four weekend training sessions of the Marianas PaddleFest at the Hyatt Regency Saipan beachfront.

Male paddlers jockey for position in one of the heats held in the race last Nov. 7.

One of the youth paddlers who participated in one of the four weekend training sessions steers his paddleboard toward the shore.

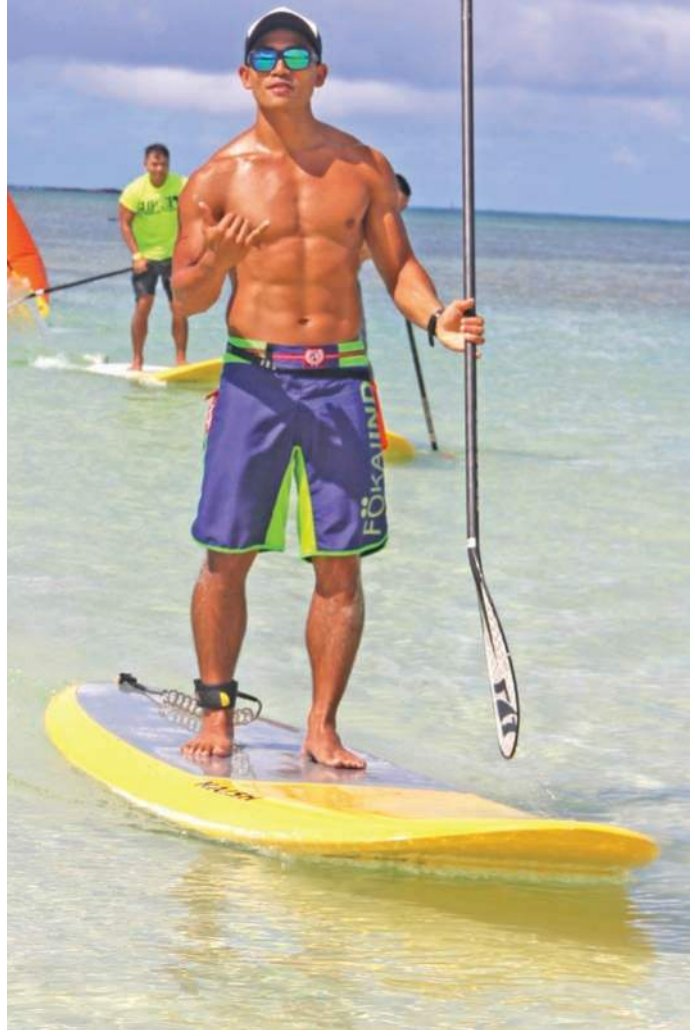
Male paddlers listen to Guam Olympian Sean Pangelinan, left, during his free clinic held during the Marianas PaddleFest.

Hiromi Matagolai, right, makes a turn in one of the buoys on the race-course with Harumi Suzuki close behind.

Jack Kabiriel slows down as he nears the shore after the practice run.

Dino Manning assists a youth paddler.

Female paddlers head off to the racecourse.



Guam Olympian Sean Pangelinan enjoys the sunny weather.

Male paddlers wait for the horn that will signal the start of the race.

Joey Tudela, left, tries to breakaway from the rest of the field.

Panthers' bid for perfect season ends with loss to Falcons

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Conley, Green lead Grizzlies past Lakers, 112-96

PAGE 25

TDI vs Mariana Resort for last playoff spot

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Top Development, Inc. and Mariana Resort will contest the last playoff berth in the 2nd JP World Corp. Customer Appreciation Basketball League tomorrow at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

The rubber scheduled for 7pm this Wednesday was set up after TDI defeated Mariana Resort, 92-82, in the second game last Wednesday and CUC won over Docomo, 102-98, in the first match. The four teams finished the round-robin regular season with similar 2-6 records and to break the tie, league officials implemented a quotient system with Docomo ending up at No. 6 and CUC taking the No. 7 slot, leaving TDI and Mariana Resort to battle for the final quarterfinal ticket.

The winner of the TDI-Mariana Resort tiff will face the No. 1-ranked Tan Holdings in the quarterfinals. Tan Holdings prevailed in a three-way deadlock with MBI/KFC and Joeten after the three squads rounded up the regular season with identical 7-1 marks. MBI/KFC dropped to second, followed by Joeten, while Saipan Ice and McDonalds placed fourth and fifth, respectively.

TDI avoided early elimination after rallying past Mariana Resort, which led by as much as 12 in the first quarter, 29-17, before falling apart in the end.

Raymond Velasco and Nestor Arreza alternately helped TDI recover from the early double-figure deficit and by the end of the third period, their team was only behind by a hair, 67-68. TDI went on to complete the come-from-behind win in the final canto with Velasco and Arreza getting assistance from Henry Manipon. The trio combined for 21 of the team's 25 points in the final canto to outscore the entire Mariana Resort crew, which registered only 14 points.

Velasco finished the game with 37 points, while Arreza added 27. Manipon contributed 12 and Jommel Pollisco also had double figures with 14.

Ryan Manglona led all scorers with his season-high 45 points, but his big offensive game went down the drain, as he failed to get enough support from his teammates.

In the first game, CUC secured a spot to the next round after outlasting Docomo. CUC took the win after dropping five of its last six games.

Eugene Manglona had 36 points in CUC's important victory, including two

See TDI on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Top Development, Inc.'s Henry Manipon unloads a jumper against McDonald's McClain Achas during their game in the JP World caging last week at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium. TDI will face Mariana Resort tomorrow night for the last playoff berth.

Iakopo hopes to revive local interest in rugby

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Iakopo

Stanley Iakopo is back on Saipan where he hopes to organize a rugby association and in the process revive local interest in the sport.

"I'm excited for this project. This is my way of giving back to the community that I've been a part of. I came back to share the knowledge and skills that I've learned while I'm on active duty," said Iakopo, who represented the CNMI in track and field in the then South Pacific Games in 1997.

He's been away for seven years as he served as an Air Force Reserve Command recruiter under the 944th Fighter Wing with a rank of master sergeant.

Iakopo, who was also into bodybuilding and mixed martial arts, told *Saipan Tribune* that his first step in reviving the local rugby association is to seek help from and get sanctioned by the Northern Marianas Sports Association.

"There's a lot of work to be done but first I need to inform NMSA that I want to get rugby back on Saipan. I will then call a meeting so we could hold an election and get the board organized," said Iakopo, who played professional rugby with the Air Force team while in active duty.

"Rugby has been played here in the mid to late '90s with the likes of David Banes, Bruce Berline, Jerome Ieomore, and Soni Poume leading the way," added the former Public School System special education teacher.

Iakopo, who is married to the former Priscilla Flores Maratita, said before the CNMI always joined the Guam Rugby Invitational Tournament where they used to beat the hosts in several seven- and 10-aside games.

"But Guam now is at a different level. They are now a part of [World Rugby]. That's why I'm also talking to [the Guam Rugby Football Union] for some guidance and how can they help us to get things going here," added Iakopo.

Guam is currently ranked 72nd in the world and eighth in Asia—be-

See IAKOPO on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
MJD Enterprises' Bobby Sampang, right, fakes off the defense of Erika's Catering/Ferrera Builders' Danny Illahi during an earlier game in the masters division of the San Antonio caging at the San Antonio court. MJD is now in semis following a 106-75 rout of CES Electronics last Saturday.

MJD eases way to semifinals

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

MJD Enterprises booked a semis ticket in the masters division of the 2015 San Antonio Community Action Network Basketball League after routing CES Electronics, 106-75, last Saturday night at the San Antonio court.

MJD will now be paired against GMJ Wholesale/IKKI in the semifinals with the winner facing in the finals the victor of the Armatech-VM Production playoff match. The semis schedule has yet to be announced at press time.

As expected, the highly favored MJD drew little resistance from CES in the former's bid to eliminate the latter. MJD was picked to win the playoff match easily, having ruled the elimination round with its perfect 8-0 mark. While MJD was ranked at the top of the ladder in the playoffs, CES was on the opposite side, finishing the regular season at eighth place with its 1-7 mark.

MJD took no time in asserting its might against CES, opening a 25-15 lead after the first period. Seven different players hit the board for MJD in the first frame with four of them knocking in at least two field goals apiece.

On the other hand, CES could not keep up with MJD's firepower, as only Ariel Abadilla drilled more than one field goal for the losing squad in the first 10 minutes of play.

In the next 10 minutes, MJD continued to pile up points to stretch its lead

See MJD on Page 26